PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1988-89

COMPRISING PERIOD
19 DECEMBER 1988—13 JANUARY 1989

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HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. J. Coxon

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

19 December 1988

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 144**

THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 19 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL
Lords amendments agreed to.

HARWICH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

1. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to give income support to 16 to 18-year-olds for whom the Government have not found a YTS place.

The Minister of State, Department of Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): No, Sir.

Mr. Macdonald: Has the Minister considered the case of my constituent, Mr. Calum Morrison, the details of which I sent to him on Friday? My constituent will be leaving school at Christmas and will have to wait seven months before an appropriate YTS place becomes available. Does the Minister appreciate that there are a number of young people in my constituency in exactly the same circumstances? Will he therefore agree to restore eligibility for income support to youngsters who are willing to work and train, but for whom no work and training is available? Does he agree with Prince Edward that the denial of income support in those circumstances is a blow that could wreck a young man's life?

Mr. Scott: The facts are slightly different from those presented by the hon. Gentleman. The young man concerned was offered a similar training scheme with the construction industry training board to start in January. However, it was located in Inverness and, for his own reasons, he decided that he would prefer to wait for a local course. It remains an option for the young man to remain in school until the end of the academic year. There are two schools which could offer him full courses during that time and he could then move straight on to his youth training scheme.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not stop the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) at the time, but I remind him that we do not use the names of members of the royal family to support our arguments.

Mr. McCrindle: Although I generally endorse the Government's policy of weaning young people away from state benefits, does my hon. Friend recognise that a place has not yet been found on a YTS for some 16 to 18-year-olds who are both unemployed and homeless? Will he tell me whether consideration is being given to flexibility in the operation of that rule? Is this not an ideal example of targeting benefits where the need is greatest?

Mr. Scott: First, the number of places available exceeds the number of people wishing to take them up in every region of the country. Secondly, vulnerable groups are of course able to receive income support and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State retains a power to pay that benefit where, otherwise, exceptional hardship might be caused.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister has just said that there is an excess of places in specific regions. Statistically, that may be the case, but is he aware that the difficulties of a youngster in travelling from Redcar to Hartlepool, and the costs incurred, are similar to those faced by the youngster in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) in travelling from the Western Isles to Inverness? It is ludicrous for the Minister to suggest that young people can make such journeys without any financial assistance.

Mr. Scott: Unless the young person is particularly vulnerable and falls within those groups, or is likely to suffer exceptional hardship, I take the view that it is better for him to obtain a YTS place, even if that involves some travel, rather than start life on benefit.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) has implied that there are young people who cannot get youth training schemes and therefore they cannot get other benefits. They may be required to live on their own. They therefore have no income support. Will my hon. Friend make it clear that any young person can, if he so wishes, get a youth training scheme and, if he does so, will then qualify for the other benefit?

Mr. Scott: I confirm exactly what my hon. Friend has said.

Severe Weather Payments

2. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the effect of the wind-chill factor in determining the eligibility of claimants for exceptionally severe weather payments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Only one recently, from the hon. Gentleman himself.

Mr. Wallace: I am very grateful to the Minister for the reply that he sent me last week. Does he agree that it is not acceptable, when the meteorological office can find precise ways to measure the wind-chill factor, for him to give as a reason for not incorporating those measurements the excuse that they would lead to uncertainty? Does he accept that the wind-chill factor is a real element for many people and that draughts can cause more discomfort, particularly to the elderly, than the air-ground temperature, which is the current basis for measurements? Will he consider the evidence from the meteorological office and agree to reconsider the matter?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is right. The main factor is air temperature. Wind-chill is a much lesser factor. The hon. Gentleman is also wrong to state that wind-chill would not complicate matters. It certainly would and it would make the system much less fair. Top-floor flats would fare much worse in that respect than ground-floor flats and southern aspects are much better than north-facing aspects.

The benefit of the scheme that we have introduced is that it is easy to understand, easy to administer and payments can be made very quickly on the basis of air temperature, which is overwhelmingly the main factor.

Mr. Flynn: The Minister has shown eloquently just how insupportable is the scheme. Does he recall that when it was put to the test in the winter of 1987, it collapsed under the weight of its own absurdity and complexity? Should it not now be replaced by a scheme that is much easier to understand, where payments are decided automatically at a national level, and paid automatically? Simply advertising the scheme last time cost the equivalent of 82,000 severe weather payments. For how many more winters are the Government going to dole out cold comfort in a scheme that is crude, wasteful, unintelligible and paltry?

Mr. Lloyd: The present scheme is much improved in comparison to that to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It stands no comparison with what existed when the Labour party was in office, because there was no such scheme. Is the hon. Gentleman trying to suggest, in contradiction to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), that there should be a national figure to trigger payments rather than a regional one? The hon. Gentleman should know, and hon. Members from Scotland will support this, that different regions experience very different weather at different times. Our system is far fairer than that suggested by the hon. Gentleman because it recognises that.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a large element of cant and hypocrisy in the comments—*[Interruption.]* How much was spent on the payments in 1978-79 and how much was spent in the last tax year?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right. There was no such scheme under Labour. The scheme worked very well last year. We have improved it further and it will work better still.

Family Credit

3. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the take-up of family credit.

7. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the take-up of family credit.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): Since the start of the new scheme over 450,000 claims have been received. At the end of November, over 260,000 families were receiving family credit. In addition, about 47,000 claims were on hand, 32,000 of which were awaiting replies from inquiries to employers or claimants. Overall, the underlying caseload is now approaching 300,000.

Mr. Boyes: Are not the figures still well below the 60 per cent. objective or target that was set? Are they not well below the 40 per cent. to which the Secretary of State is said to have referred to because he takes into consideration the fact that not everyone who submits a claim will be successful? Is form FC1 not one of the problems? I do not know how many hon. Members have seen that form which people must fill in. It consists of 16 pages, 13 sections and almost 100 questions in small type. I went through the form this morning trying to fill it in and I had a hell of a problem. Does the Secretary of State agree that making that form simpler would help matters? Will the Secretary of State press his colleague, the Chief Secretary to the

Treasury to provide £500,000 for an advertising campaign to help people take up family credit? If one Department can get such sums, I hope that the Secretary of State will fight for it as well.

Mr. Moore: I shall correct some of the hon. Gentleman's extraordinary inaccuracies. First, there has been, and continues to be, a sizeable advertising campaign. As compared with the figure mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, more than £3 million has already been spent and more is currently being spent on a targeted campaign. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that still more is needed.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, about form FC1, although he personally may have difficulty with it, by comparison with the old family income supplement system, the success rate using the form about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned, and with which he has such difficulty, is more than 70 per cent. Having said that, if there is any way in which we can improve form FC1 and the method of application, we shall certainly consider it. If one makes the form too short and too simple, one has the problem that the process may have to be gone through twice.

As to the hon. Gentleman's first point—he made many—I stress that, on the figures that I gave him, we are running at a caseload of nearly 40 per cent. That takes into account the expectation that some applications will not be successful.

Mrs. Roe: How much is being spent on providing family credit as compared with family income support?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend raises a point that I would have covered had I not been too extensive with my previous reply. We are spending at more than double the rate that the expenditure pattern was under FIS. That very successful expenditure pattern is illustrative of the degree to which family credit is helping those families in greatest need.

Mr. Eastham: Earlier, the Minister made reference to there being 260,000 recipients of family credit by the end of November. Does the Minister agree with estimates that 750,000 people are probably entitled to benefit? Is there not a possibility that those who qualify feel that there is a stigma attached to making an application, because of means testing, which creates indignity and acts as a deterrent to taking up benefit? In Manchester, 4,000 families have taken up family credit, from which one can calculate that more than 12,000 families are actually entitled to it. When will the Government do something to make the public understand that there should be no stigma; understandably people are appalled at the very idea of a means-test system.

Mr. Moore: I accept entirely the aims behind the hon. Gentleman's question. We should make clear that no stigma is attached to the current benefit, which I recollect was welcomed by both sides of the House on its introduction. The problem is not of stigma, but of trying to attract attention to and publicising family credit—of trying to get it across to people and to communicate. The take-up is reasonable, but it is not yet at the levels that I and right hon. and hon. Members would wish. Anything that I and the Government can do by way of targeting of the kind that we are now undertaking—at post offices, which people visit to collect child benefit—will be welcomed and encouraged by us and, I know, by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Madel: As this is an important benefit for those having modest incomes but who still have to pay mortgages or rents, and rates, will my right hon. Friend ask local authorities and building societies to see what they can do to publicise it?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point—*[Interruption.]* It is extraordinary that Opposition Members, who are supposed to be concerned about people who are on low incomes and about low employment figures, do not seem to be interested in helping to publicise a benefit such as family credit. Those right hon. and hon. Members who are genuinely concerned, as opposed to those who are concerned with the politics of care rather than with real care, will continue making sensible suggestions, as does my hon. Friend. I shall certainly consider them.

Mr. Frank Field: When will the Government meet their modest objective of achieving a 50 per cent. take-up rate? May the House be given a Christmas bonus today and be told the actual date?

Mr. Moore: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the House will not have its Christmas bonus withdrawn as a consequence of Labour's economic failure. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I am as disappointed as he is about the take-up so far. However, I am not over-disappointed at the level of expenditure, which is now running in excess of that planned. The hon. Gentleman also knows—and I shall return to this point in a later question—that there is an enormous distinction to be made between the expenditure pattern and actual caseload take-up. Expenditure is already running at a level greater than that which we anticipated.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the most effective means of working towards a higher take-up is the campaign in the post offices, through which mothers with child benefit books can receive leaflets giving full details of family credit? Is my right hon. Friend certain that the post offices are making the leaflets readily available to their targets?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is the second stage of the campaign: there has already been advertising in the national media, including television. Along with the current radio campaign, a targeted leaflet campaign is taking place in the post offices, and so far take-up has been excellent. I want to study the results carefully to see whether any similar campaigns will be necessary before the next major television advertising campaign.

Mr. Kirkwood: I recognise the need for increased information and publicity. Does the Secretary of State recognise, however, that all that will be to no avail if there are not enough properly trained staff to deal with and process the claims? Will he comment on last month's Public Accounts Committee report, which had some disturbing things to say about the resources devoted to staff in local offices?

Mr. Moore: As the hon. Gentleman follows these issues with care, he should distinguish between matters

concerning local offices and the way in which the benefit is being handled at north Fylde. There have been no problems with the new system apart from initial difficulties. The only additional complication at north Fylde was caused by the postal strike earlier in the year. In all other respects, arrangements there are working excellently. The only other difficulty that sometimes delays receipt of family credit is the need to refer to the employer for additional information, and we are not far from our target of 18 days' turnround from the time of application.

Social Fund (Applications)

4. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretry of State for Social Security how many requests for review of a refusal of assistance under the social fund have been received to the latest convenient date; how many such reviews have been completed; and what proportion of those reviewed have led to a reversal of the previous decision.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: By 31 October 54,925 applications for review had been received by social fund officers. They revised their decisions in 30 per cent. of those cases. I regret that information about the number of reviews completed in DSS local offices is not available.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the review system is extremely speedy compared with the previous appeals system that applied under the equivalent single payment regulations? Does he also agree that it appears to dispense no less justice?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is quite right. One of the merits of the new system is the speed of review. Reviews by social fund officers take a matter of days, and outside reviews by social fund inspectors are completed in an average of 17 days. That compares with 21 weeks for appeal under the old single payment system.

Mr. Tony Banks: But why are one in three of them wrong at the point of application? That is the truth behind the statistics that the Minister has given. They mask a great deal of misery and suffering throughout the country. The Minister is playing Scrooge, but without Scrooge's generosity and open heart.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman would display his talent for indignation even more if the review did not lead to any changes.

The statistics were intended to show that in 30 per cent. of cases the social fund officer considered it right to think again. That is wholly beneficial in a brand new system in which officers for the first time must exercise discretion, which is one of the merits of the system. That the changes are under review shows that decisions are being thought about hard, and that bodes well for the continuing success of the scheme.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister recall that, whether on review or on initial decisions, some 7 per cent. of those rejected for social fund loans are rejected because they are already so in debt they simply cannot afford to repay a loan? Since by definition those people must be the poorest of all, how do the Government square that with their claim to target help on those in the greatest need?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think that the hon. Lady's logic is impeccable. The fact that people are already in debt does not necessarily mean that they are the poorest; it means that they are the people who borrowed the most. It would be stupid to bring into the system an additional loan making the debt even harder to repay. In any event, the scheme is so devised that in cases of real hardship the officer can extend the period of repayment so that essential purchases and loan payments can be made.

Pensions

6. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will express in terms of an index of real values the amount of pension received by a single pensioner and a married couple at the latest available date, and the comparable figure *(a)* two, *(b)* five and *(c)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Moore: Taking November 1976 as the base expressed as 100, the index by income units of retirement pension and income-related benefits, plus occupational pension, was, in 1981, 113·7, in 1984, 125·9 and in 1986, 133·6, respectively.

Mr. Dykes: My right hon. Friend and I can imagine what the index equivalent would have been in 1978 or 1979. Do not those figures speak volumes? Do they not show that, once again, when it comes to the aggregate deal that pensioners in this country receive, from Labour they get rhetoric and propaganda and from us they get real results?

Mr. Moore: I am delighted to say that I could not have expressed that better than my hon. Friend.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Secretary of State confirm that if the Tory Government had not scrapped the link between pensions and average national earnings, pensioners would be receiving a substantially greater sum than that which they now receive?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman seems to ignore the very point that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) made—that the supposed support for pensioners while the Labour Government were in office meant that, on average, the pensioner had an increase—*[Interruption.]* It is relatively important to the pensioner. The pensioner had an increase of less than 3 per cent. during the whole period when the Labour Government were in office, compared with the 23 per cent. increase that they have already received under this Governme

Mr. Waller: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the achievement of a substantial increase in real terms is particularly significant in the light of the very considerable increase in the number of pensioners as a whole, which has resulted in a greater call on resources? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that, thanks to the substantial growth of the economy, the great majority of pensioners who are retiring now can look forward to a substantial income from the pension that relates to their former employment?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. It is a fundamental mistake to fail to notice the extra 1 million pensioners who are, I am happy to say, living longer. It is also a mistake not to recognise the combination of benefits to which a pensioner is entitled, a combination that is so often ignored by the Opposition, who nearly destroyed for a whole generation of pensioners the work and the thrift that had been put into their savings.

Mr. Battle: Does the Secretary of State agree that when the pension increase to which he referred is coupled with the reductions in housing benefit, very many pensioners are worse off because their disposable income is much less?

Mr. Moore: Again that is utter nonsense. If it had been at the back of his question, I should have given the statistics to the hon. Gentleman, but I draw his attention to the appalling problem that pensioners faced over relative increases in housing benefit, along with rent increases, during the period when the Labour Government were in office. That was not, of course, his question, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to examine those figures with too much care because he would then realise how appalling was the Labour Government's record.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: How does the value of pensioners' income in the United Kingdom compare with those of pensioners in the European Community as a whole?

Mr. Moore: Pensioners here do very much better than pensioners in most of the European Community countries. The pensioner in this country receives benefits on top of his basic state pension. If the Opposition had any interest at all in the real lot of the pensioner, they would understand that only two other nations in Western Europe offer to all pensioners a similar basic rate pension entitlement. It means that all pensioners here, especially the poor, have a basic pension, unlike those countries, quoted in bizarre literature produced by the Opposition, that do not offer to pensioners the same basic pension and where those on very low income, receive practically no pension at all. If those are the politics of the new Socialist party, heaven help the pensioners.

Child Benefit

8. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he received following his decision to freeze child benefit.

Mr. Moore: I have received less than 200 letters on child benefit since my uprating statement on 27 October.

Mr. Davis: Have any of those representations made the point that the people who are most badly affected by this decision are those who are working for low wages and that the take-up rate for child benefit is 100 per cent., compared with 40 per cent. for family credit?

Mr. Moore: It is not 100 per cent.; it is less than that. To be precise, it is 98 per cent. There is a difference. The facts to which the hon. Gentleman refers rightly draw attention to problems with the take-up of family credit, but that does not deny to families the opportunity and the ability, with the help of hon. Members, to avail themselves of family credit. That would mean an increase of almost double what they would have received, had they simply received a flat rate increase in child benefit.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that many Conservative Members do not feel that child benefit as presently constituted is best targeted? Will he particularly bear in mind the importance of ensuring that those very large sums of money go to the families and the children who are most in need and are not spread in the very untargeted fashion that they are at present?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is quite right to remind the House that the absence of an uprating this year does not exclude the fact that we are spending £4·5 billion on child benefit in the coming year. He was right to remind the House that 70 per cent. of child benefit goes to families with above average incomes.

Mr. Madden: Does the Secretary of State accept that information about child benefit and family credit will be much harder to obtain if benefit shops in Bradford, Shipley and Keighley close on Friday and are not re-opened next year? Will he call upon Bradford council to keep those advice shops open pending a meeting that I have requested with Ministers of his Department, Members of Parliament and other representatives from Bradford? Will he urge Bradford council to keep those shops open pending the outcome of that meeting because of the urgency of the situation in which many people will be placed early next year?

Mr. Moore: I am tempted to say that I admire the way in which the hon. Member has got in the point about which he has written to me, but that might only encourage such activity. I remind him, as I did through my Office and in correspondence, that the benefit offices for which I am responsible remain open and able to give capable advice.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that most child benefit is paid to households who pay out more in taxation than they receive in benefits of one kind or another, and is, therefore, a badly targeted benefit? Does he understand the extraordinary attitude of the Opposition who oppose tax cuts for average earners, yet are prepared to shower child benefit on the rich?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to remind us that more than 80 per cent. of families in receipt of child benefit are taxpayers and have benefited more than somewhat from the reduction in taxation this year and in previous years.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Secretary of State aware that during the lifetime of this Government successive Chancellors have raised the married man's allowance by 22 per cent. while successive Secretaries of State for Social Security have cut child benefit by 13 per cent? Will he explain by what leap of mental gymnastics his Government have concluded that the cost of maintaining a wife has gone up by one fifth but the cost of bringing up a child has gone down by one eighth? Will he also explain why they regard universal tax allowances as being well targeted, but universal benefits as being badly targeted?

Mr. Moore: I find it almost incomprehensible that the hon. Gentleman, for whom I occasionally have some fondness, has the temerity to make any comparison across the Floor of the House about the relative help and support for families with children between the Opposition when in office and the Government. In only one out of 62 sad months while they were in office did their ability to help families with children come anywhere near the complete record of the Government in office. That is their record of failure and it is an appalling base on which to ask a question.

Administration (Paperwork)

9. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps is he taking to reduce paperwork relating to social security administration.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The operational strategy—our innovative and massive programme to computerise social security administration—means that by mid-1991 most local office work will be computerised. That will result in a considerable reduction in paper records as well as producing a more efficient service for customers and better jobs for staff.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Will my hon. Friend assure me that he is continuing the work started by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), now Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in simplifying the forms, and that the computerisation will enable us as Members of Parliament to get slightly swifter answers to the queries that we send to what was the DHSS and is now the DSS than we are receiving at present?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, it should certainly help the latter. More importantly, it will enable us to get information more quickly to the claimants. As for the leaflets and forms to which my hon. Friend referred, we have reviewed all our forms. We still have more work to do on them, but the object is to make them fewer in number, clearer and easier to follow. That is already apparent in many of the forms now available, but I should point out that it will not always mean that they are shorter. One of the misapprehensions is that shortness makes for clarity. It does not. We design our forms so that they can be gone through logically and easily filled in, so we are aiming for simplicity as well as a reduction in numbers.

Mr. Rooker: What action is the Minister taking to ensure that paperwork is readable? Conservative Members do not hold as many surgeries as my hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* Does the Minister appreciate that the legibility of some of the forms, especially the carbonless paper forms, causes massive problems for constituents and makes it more difficult for us and others to advise them because we cannot read the information entered on the forms? Something must be done to improve that part of the operation.

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman held as many surgeries as he implies, he would know that many of the forms are much better and clearer. Part of the exercise in which we are engaged is designed to ensure that all the information is immediately available and simple to follow, so that even the hon. Gentleman will be able to understand the forms.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Will my hon. Friend tell the House how much cash has been invested in the computerisation programme?

Mr. Lloyd: Since the scheme was first developed in 1982, about £1·2 billion has been invested.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does the Minister recall that reducing paperwork and simplifying the system were among the reasons given for savaging benefits, not least for disabled people on 11 April? Now that we have the authoritative evidence of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys about mass deprivation among disabled people, will any or all of those cuts be reversed?

Mr. Lloyd: Overall, there were no cuts in April. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, spending this year on social security is higher than it was last year. The changes that have been made have directed money to those most in need. The right hon. Gentleman also knows that the largest changes were in income support, where there is a special premium for the disabled. The other disablement benefits will be examined thoroughly again when we have all the OPCS reports. Therefore, the area in which the right hon. Gentleman is interested benefited in April this year and there is more to come.

Mr. Jack: In the review of paperwork, will my hon. Friend ensure that he maintains on paper a supply of the excellent information to citizens advice bureaux, Age Concern and other organisations which give information to the public about our benefits?

Mr. Lloyd: We are anxious that all outside organisations, in addition to those mentioned by my hon. Friend, have a full knowledge of the services offered by the Department.

Housing Benefit

10. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people have been excluded from housing benefits as a result of the recent changes in the social security system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Housing benefit continues to be available to all young people assessed as needing help with their rent and rates.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that there are 30,000 youngsters living in cardboard boxes and anywhere else they can find shelter because of the Government's draconian cuts in social security? Do the Government listen to people such as the royal family who are appalled and shocked——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said earlier on that we do not introduce into the debate members of the royal family to support our arguments.

Mr. Wray: Are the Government not listening to many eminent people in our society who are shocked and appalled at the Government's draconian cuts that have left kids vulnerable and without dignity?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not believe the figure of 30,000 young people, none of whom are excluded from housing benefit, which is available to any person—and young person—whose income is below the qualifying amount and who does not have capital of £8,000. In addition, they are guaranteed a place on a YTS scheme. Rather than continuing to talk of those who have nowhere to live or no income, the hon. Gentleman should draw their attention to the fact that there is a ready scheme that provides income, and a social security system that enables housing benefit to be paid to them.

Mr. Rowe: I thank my hon. Friend for that reassuring reply. Does he agree that a number of voluntary organisations and others are deeply concerned about the short-term future of a number of hostels, especially those

for young people leaving residential care? Will he assure us that they are mistaken in believing that changes in the social security system are responsible for that anxiety or ensure that none of the hostels are closed before the report of the targeting review appears?

Mr. Lloyd: I think that my hon. Friend may be referring to the proposed changes in hostel board and lodging. We are examining the replies that have been given and will introduce a fair system for hostels. We recognise the value of their work and intend to ensure that they continue to do that work.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Cathedrals

69. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the numbers and main responsibilities of *(a)* clergy and *(b)* other staff in the cathedrals where the Church Commissioners have some responsibility for payments; how many cathedrals are involved; and if he will make a statement.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners (Mr. Michael Alison): For each cathedral, except Oxford and Sodor and Man, the commissioners pay the stipend of the dean or provost and of two residentiary canons. This amounts to a total of 123 clergy in 41 cathedrals. The commissioners also make block grants to these 41 cathedrals towards the pay of other clergy and lay employees. They have no information about the total number of employees who benefit. The responsibilities of cathedral staff are determined by the chapter in accordance with cathedral statutes.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that hundreds of thousands of people are flocking into cathedrals, which offer a big mission opportunity to the Church? Will they not be completely mystified and will not their concept of the Deity be annihilated if present anti-sexist language proposed for the Prayer Book and God is allowed through Synod and Parliament?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend's question arises in the context of cathedrals. I am glad to be able to give him a neutral response—a cathedral is neither a he nor a she but an it. I reassure my hon. Friend that many years will have to elapse before cathedral liturgies are bowdlerised to get rid of any reference to the male gender.

Ecclesiastical Courts (Legal Aid)

70. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the provision of legal aid in the ecclesiastical courts.

Mr. Alison: A legal aid fund was established under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 to assist with costs that a complainant or accused person might incur in connection with proceedings relating to an offence under that Measure. Legal aid may also be given in respect of proceedings arising out of loss of office.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware of some proposals that have been made by St. John's church, Boscombe, which is in my constituency? Objectors have been informed by the diocese that they may be liable for ecclesiastical court costs if they exercise their right to object. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, without legal aid, those of my constituents who cannot afford such a risk are effectively being denied the right to object, and will he raise this matter of principle with the commissioners?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend can be relaxed about this on behalf of his constituents. He is referring to a case that may arise under a so-called faculty application in the consistory court. I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the chancellor of the consistory court will not usually order the objector to pay the costs, unless he considers the objection to be unreasonable or vexatious. Applications for a faculty may be made without individuals having to incur the cost of employing legal representation.

Cathedrals (Admission Charges)

72. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the commissioners' policy on charging tourists who visit the Church of England cathedrals.

Mr. Alison: This is a matter not for the commissioners but for cathedrals.

Mr. Chapman: Given that millions of people visit some of our cathedrals and hundreds of thousands visit most other cathedrals each year, could the Church Commissioners, with their responsibility for such matters, at least positively encourage charging the public to visit cathedrals, and thereby recognise the escalating costs of wear and tear? Should there not be admission charges on Mondays to Saturdays at least, with free access to certain parts of cathedrals for those who truly wish to worship on their own?

Mr. Alison: I note my hon. Friend's point. I am grateful for the obvious concern that he has expressed about the income and costs of maintenance of cathedrals. Some cathedrals charge an entrance fee, but, alas, the additional income cannot be relied on as a regular source, because of the obvious peaks and troughs in the tourist season. Some cathedrals prefer not even to charge mid-week visitors, as some may wish to worship. Therefore, it would be wrong to try to impose any central pattern of admission charges.

Mr. Frank Field: Are not charges preferable to selling cathedral treasures?

Mr. Alison: The scale of charges to avoid selling things like Mappa Mundi would be so gigantic as to make it questionable whether the cathedrals would in any sense be able to meet the scale of costs involved, in Hereford, for example, where the sum of £7 million is quoted as the minimum required for the refurbishment and maintenance of the fabric.

Mr. Rowe: Has the time not come for the care of the fabric of these great buildings to fall on the Government? Many Christians in this country find a clear distinction between the business of having to concentrate vast resources, and clerics' and laymen's time, on trying to preserve buildings, and seeking the cure of souls.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend knows that, through various subordinate and intermediate agencies such as English Heritage and other bodies, the Government contribute a considerable sum of money to the maintenance of parish churches, many of which have extreme historical value. It has hitherto been thought that the glamour, scale and photogenic qualities of our cathedrals have been sources for generating their own flow of income. I take note of what my hon. Friend says. I have absolutely no means of committing the Government to any contributions to cathedrals.

Mr. Cryer: Does the right hon. Member endorse the policy of those cathedrals that do not charge? Will he consider providing more support from the Government? Does he agree that such buildings should be supported collectively, rather than face the possibility of being privatised, selling tourist services to the highest bidder, and maximising revenue through several slick, nasty public relations and commercial promotions, which would destroy the nature of cathedrals?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman referred to cathedrals being privatised. I am glad to say that they have not hitherto been in the public domain. It is a matter of publicising them, rather than privatising them—publicising them with a view to getting as much care and concern as they need to mobilise general national support from all people of good will to help them with their ongoing costs. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, given that we have 42 splendid cathedrals, the level at which they are maintained, their beauty and viability remain a testimony to the considerable resources they and private institutions have been able to raise over past centuries.

St. Jude's Church, Southsea

73. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the Church Commissioners will take steps to prevent the demolition of St. Jude's church, Southsea.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have not received proposals from the diocese involving St. Jude's church, although I understand that its future is under consideration by the diocese. I am arranging to provide my hon. Friend with an explanatory leaflet about the procedure that would apply were proposals to be submitted to the commissioners. He will note from it that, should such proposals be received, he may make representations to the commissioners.

Mr. Martin: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will he convey to the commissioners the great strength of feeling among many of my constituents about the demolition of this church, which has been proposed by the parochial council, and that it will be opposed as strongly as possible by those constituents who wish to see such an important church retain its parish function?

Mr. Alison: Yes, I shall certainly take note of my hon. Friend's comments and I shall see that the commissioners are made aware of them.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Disabled People (Parking Spaces)

75. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will review the operation of disabled parking spaces within the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): No, Sir. The operation of disabled parking spaces in Star Chamber Court was reviewed by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee in January this year when it was confirmed that 12 parking spaces should be reserved for disabled drivers and the remaining five spaces should be available for use by right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Butler: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the parking spaces for the disabled appear to have been abused by able-bodied Members of the House? Is that not a bad example to set to private car parks which, I understand, suffer from similar abuse?

Mr. Wakeham: I am quite sure that my hon. Friend is right to say that it sets a bad example. I understand that those spaces are checked at regular intervals by the authorities of the House and that those who have parked there without authority are reminded either personally or in writing not to use the spaces reserved for the disabled.

Mr. Wigley: Can the Lord President give us an assurance that, when the new buildings are complete, not only parking spaces but the need for disabled people to have access to the buildings used by Members of Parliament for meeting delegations, and associated matters, will be kept in mind and that there will be full provision?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that those matters will be kept in mind. I shall take the opportunity raised by the hon. Gentleman's question to remind the Sub-Committee of the Services Committee to bear those points specifically in mind.

"A Patient Voice at the GMC"

76. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has received from the General Medical Council a copy of its response to the report entitled, "A Patient Voice at the GMC", by one of its members, Mrs. Jean Robinson.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Spearing: Can the Lord President put the reply into the Library? Does he not agree that major charges were made in Mrs. Robinson's report, to which the GMC should respond, especially as a major duty laid on it by the House is the protection of the public? No doubt the Government will wish to proceed by agreement, but does the Lord President agree that it is time for the GMC to come up with its own proposals to restore public confidence in its procedures, so that it can deal effectively with those few members of the profession who let down the profession and the public?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure whether I am entitled to put a copy of that document in the Library, but I shall

check on that. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the GMC set up a working party in May 1987 to review the procedures relating to alleged neglect or disregard of professional responsibilities. Mrs. Robinson is a member of that working party and will, no doubt, ensure that her views are well understood by members of the working party.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my right hon. Friend recall the tragic death of Harriet English, the daughter of my agent and constituent? I have twice raised in the House the matter of those tragic circumstances. Do not the facts of this case, as of a number of others, show that there is an urgent need for the reform of the GMC's procedures?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly know about the tragic case to which my hon. Friend refers and I know the parents well. Indeed, it is a tragic case. Of course, the GMC has produced new rules, which are now before the Privy Council. It is considering the matters raised by Mrs. Robinson's report—and other matters. Whether it comes forward with further new rules is a question for it in the first instance, rather than me.

Select Committee on Scottish Affairs

77. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what estimate he has of savings resulting from the failure to nominate a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs during the parliamentary Session, 1987-88.

Mr. Wakeham: No precise estimate of the savings is possible, but the expenses borne by the House of Commons Administration vote for the Scottish Affairs Committee 1986-87 were £22,774. In addition, the gross costs of printing and publishing the proceedings of the Committee were £44,985.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Lord President of the Council accept that that is a very small sum to pay for the scrutiny of a major Government Department? If the problems in setting up the Committee relate to the political dynamism of Scotland rather than to a cost-paring exercise, would it not be appropriate for the Government to recognise the political aspirations of the people of Scotland, shown recently both in the Govan by-election result and in opinion polls which suggest that the alternative is to establish a Scottish Government with communications to the European Community?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Lady anticipates to some degree the debate that we are to have tomorrow. I assure her that cost is not the reason why it has not been possible to set up the Committee; there are other reasons, which will be revealed in the debate tomorrow.

Mr. Gow: Would it assist my right hon. Friend in setting up the Select Committee if he knew that my hon. Friends the Members for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) and for Crawley (Mr. Soames)—and even the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow)—would all be prepared to serve on it?

Mr. Wakeham: No doubt my hon. Friend's contribution will be valuable tomorrow night, but I do not think that it will help me to answer the question today.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us are surprised that there have been reductions in expenditure on any aspect of Scottish affairs in recent years? Might not these savings therefore be regarded as a desirable precedent?

Mr. Wakeham: The level of public expenditure per capita in Scotland is substantially above that in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Hon. Members (Salaries and Allowances)

78. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received regarding hon. Members' salaries and allowances.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Allen: Now that Members' salaries are certainly adequate, will the Lord President of the Council advise those of us who wish to perform our duties effectively both here and at home how we can get adequate allowances to provide us with sufficient staff both here and in our constituencies?

Mr. Wakeham: It is quite clear from our recent debate on procedure that the hon. Gentleman has a special view of the role of Parliament, which I do not think is shared by any other right hon. or hon. Member. Anyway, I hope that he has a nice trip to America.

Sir John Stokes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that over the years we have debated our salaries, those of assistants, secretaries and office costs ad nauseam? Some time ago we settled on a proper basis how the matter should be dealt with, and there is therefore no reason to raise it again.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is quite right, but I do not think that his advice will necessarily be accepted by all hon. Members. Salaries have been raised regularly and have now been placed on a more satisfactory basis and hon. Members must agree that the office costs allowance has been raised by a considerable amount in recent years.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Lord President of the Council aware that the Prime Minister and all her offices now cost the taxpayer more than the entire Civil List? Does he think that that represents value for money?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My right hon. Friend will know that I, too, represent the city of Nottingham. Will he take it from me that the citizens of Nottingham will think that it comes ill from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who has campaigned against the policies of the Government, to seek a higher salary and more financial help for the work that he does not do in the city of Nottingham?

Mr. Wakeham: I have enough difficulties in answering questions about Leicester in the House without getting involved in Nottingham. I can only say that my hon. Friend represents his constituents extremely well.

Mr. Marlow: May I put it to my right hon. Friend that the last thing we should do is to set up a system of allowances so that the Opposition can set up a vipers' nest of cadet apparatchiks in every Labour constituency in the country?

Mr. Wakeham: The present system has been discussed and approved in this House. The allowances are for the work of Members of Parliament, not for electioneering purposes.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) made an unpleasant and personal attack on me. It was imputed that I had asked for more salary for myself rather than put a question about the level of provision of service for Members of Parliament. Could that allegation be withdrawn?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The record will show exactly what the hon. Gentleman said.

Egg Industry

3.30 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about measures to assist the egg industry.

As I explained to the House on Friday, the Department of Health drew attention this summer to a new and growing problem from salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 linked to eggs, and since August the chief medical officer has been issuing advice to the public. As a result of the Department of Health's information, Agriculture Departments acted immediately with them and the industry to tackle the problem at every point in the production chain. This led, among other initiatives, to the publication of codes of practice to apply to commercial and breeding flocks.

The uncertainty over the implications of salmonella enteritidis has recently caused a sharp decline in egg sales. The Government have decided, in these wholly exceptional circumstances, to introduce the following two short-term measures.

The first measure will provide a payment to egg packers for the destruction of surplus eggs for a period of four weeks from 21 December. The payment will be at the rate of 30p per dozen eggs on up to 1·1 million cases. This will tackle the overhang of eggs in the system.

A second measure will be introduced to help the industry to reduce the size of the egg laying flock. This will provide for a payment for a bird in the age range 18 to 30 weeks. The scheme will enable up to 4 million hens—roughly equivalent to 10 per cent. of the laying flock—to be culled under the supervision of the Agriculture Departments.

Taken together, these two short-term measures are designed to assist the egg industry to adjust to the market situation now confronting it. The estimated cost of these two schemes is at maximum £17 million in payments to the industry. There will also be payments which are estimated at £2 million to contractors and local authorities.

I have been in contact with the European Commission to inform it of the actions we are taking.

Parliamentary approval for these new measures will be sought in Supplementary Supply Estimates for the agricultural support Votes of the Agriculture Departments and authority for the payments will rest upon the Estimates and the Appropriation Act. Pending that approval, expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund. Similar arrangements will be made for expenditure in Northern Ireland. These costs will be found from the reserve, so that there will be no addition to the planned total of public expenditure.

The Government have been formulating detailed plans for tackling this problem since the new information became available. The two codes of practice were only the start. As I made clear to the House on 1 December and again on Friday, we have been preparing a number of other steps. These will include more stringent bacteriological monitoring of animal protein for animal feed, the registration of breeding flocks and hatcheries for hygiene control purposes, and strengthening the controls relating to imported animal protein.

I hope that the actions I have announced today, taken with the advertising campaign setting out the advice of the chief medical officer and presenting the facts to consumers, will help quickly to restore order to the egg market in the interests of consumers and everyone working in that important sector of the food industry.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Following the remarks of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), it was only a matter of time before the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had to come to the House with proposals to spend taxpayers' money in an effort to bail out the troubled egg and poultry producers. Since the hon. Lady's gaffe two weeks ago, egg sales have fallen by half and over 15 million eggs each and every day cannot be sold. The future is even bleaker.

The Minister is facing a twofold problem. First, he must find a way of keeping the egg producers in business. Secondly, and more fundamentally, he must find a way of tackling the problem of salmonella in the egg and poultry industry, because, as *The Lancet* reported only this month, there is a salmonella epidemic in this country. Therefore, we are disappointed with the Minister's statement because he has yet again displayed the complacency that has throughout characterised the Government's attitude to the problem. He has manifestly failed to deal with the main problem of the extent of salmonella in eggs and poultry, which is the key to restoring public confidence in the safety of eating eggs and thus the long-term future of the industry for which we all wish to strive.

Whatever the facts, the public believe that there was an element of truth in the former Under-Secretary of State's comments, but the key question is how large is the threat of salmonella. By his support for his former junior Minister, the Secretary of State for Health has clearly a different perspective from that of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. While they pursue their departmental rivalry, the British people are left unaware of and completely confused about the extent of the problem.

Will the Minister set aside the petty bickering and, with his Cabinet colleagues, set up a small group of experts to advise us on the extent of salmonella? Only then can we work out what action is needed to tackle it. Will the Minister, too, reverse the cuts in the agricultural and food research budget, which has ironically resulted in the team working on salmonella in poultry being given their redundancy notices only last month? While the Government are pursuing such stupid and vindictive actions, how can we and the poultry industry have confidence in them?

In his statement, the Minister made great play of his initiatives on the monitoring and hygiene of the breeding flock, and, of course, the voluntary code. We believe that if it is necessary for the code to be voluntary then it ought to be statutory when it concerns public health.

Furthermore, will the Minister confirm the allegation made by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) that the Conservative Government watered down the regulations for hygiene standards in poultry feed early in the1980s? Will the Minister explain what he envisages happening to the eggs after the four-week period? What provisions is he making for the producers who may be caught out before 21 December? Is he confident that the culling of 10 per cent. of the flock will be sufficient? Does he intend paying any compensation to the workers who have been made redundant because of that?

The Minister claims that he has worked long and hard on this measure—I am sure that he has—but he has funked

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the main issue. He has failed to make any attempt to evaluate the true measure of salmonella in eggs and poultry and, until he does that, the general public will naturally remain concerned about their health, and I am afraid that public confidence will not be restored.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has asked many questions. I shall endeavour to answer them all briefly, for obvious reasons.

First, on the question of the two schemes, obviously I regret having to do this. I would much have preferred not to have had to do it, but, as the hon. Gentleman has recognised, the plain fact is that we face a difficult situation in the market place. I hope that he will agree that it is right in the interests of the industry and of the consumer that it should be dealt with straight away.

I make it clear that these are my final proposals. It is not intended that there should be any further financial sums available beyond those which I have announced. The hon. Gentleman said that the future was even bleaker. I hope that he will agree that taking action, on the one hand, to put the facts before the consumer and, on the other, dealing with the industry problem is the best way of ensuring that the future is not bleak.

The hon. Gentleman is a fair person in these matters, so I am sure that he will realise the extreme difficulty of dealing with salmonella overall and eradicating it. There are many hundreds of different types of salmonella. We are faced with a new strain that has arisen not only in this country but in others. We are having to learn as much as we can about it and to find ways of dealing with it.

It is absolutely fair to say that no country has mastered the problems of salmonella in animals and poultry because it is a highly complex disease that involves a great number of factors at all stages of the chain. One such factor is the bacteria, which can come from the environment or wild birds and which is difficult to eradicate.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no complacency on my part and we are looking at every possible way in which to deal with the problem. It would be misleading to say that the disease can be eradicated, but we are endeavouring to find the measures to minimise the risk at every stage of the production chain.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that one of the best contributions that can be made to consumers and industry alike, which is in their interests—at the end of his remarks the hon. Gentleman referred to the workers in the industry and I have as much concern about them as he has, which is why I have taken such steps today—is for the full facts to be put before the public. There is a very low degree of risk, particularly if members of the public—housewives in the kitchen—follow proper hygiene practices. It is extremely important that that message gets through to the public.

It is not the fact, as I have repeated on many occasions in the House—not just on Friday—that most eggs are infected with salmonella.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): How does the Minister know?

Mr. MacGregor: From the sampling that we have done. The incidence of salmonella in the breeding flocks of laying chicks is extremely low. All our evidence suggests that the incidence of the disease in laying flocks is extremely small. If consumers follow the advice of the chief medical officer —he is as anxious as I am to get that message across in its entirety—the risks are very, very small.

In 1987 there were 20,000 reported cases of food poisoning. There are approximately 50 reported cases of outbreaks of salmonella associated with eggs. I say outbreaks because they involved more than one person; they involved 1,000 people. Those figures set this matter in context. There are always problems about food poisoning, and we must do everything we can in the production chain and in the home to reduce the risk.

I am anxious to put all the facts before the public. Clearly there is a limit to what one can put in an advertisement, but I am seeking ways to put all the facts before the public.

The hon. Gentleman referred to disputes between the Ministry and the Department of Health. Let me refer him to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health said on 5 December:

> "There has been the closest co-operation between my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Government's chief medical officer. We all agree on our statements and on our message to the public. Whenever there are minor public health worries, it is inevitable that people will exaggerate . . . I hope that the House will get the matter in proportion and will accept that there is a health problem, which we are tackling, and that the average member of the public is not at risk."—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 23.]

We have been working together on this matter.

I apologise for the length of my reply, Mr. Speaker, but I am trying to answer all the questions. We are spending about £1 million a year on salmonella research and development. Since the new information became available to us, a working party has been considering all the research into salmonella. I hope to have its report shortly, then I can consider what further steps to take on R and D.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of a statutory code of practice as opposed to a voluntary code of practice. One can get a voluntary code of practice into operation much more quickly. We have had extensive discussions with the industry and it is clearly in its interests to have a voluntary code. However, I have not ruled out transferring the appropriate elements of the voluntary code on to a statutory footing. I have been considering that for some time.

I believe that my reply has covered most of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. I must repeat that the best contribution that everyone can make, including the workers in the industry, is to give the public the clear message that only an extremely small proportion of eggs is affected. If they follow the chief medical officer's advice, the risk to the public should be very small indeed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private Members' day and private Members' motions follow this——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): And another statement.

Mr. Speaker: I was about to say that. The Minister has made a very detailed statement. There is also to be a related debate in the name of the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) later this evening or possibly early tomorrow morning. I shall allow questions on this

statement to go on until 4.15 pm. I ask hon. Members not to repeat questions that have been asked. We have already heard long statements from the Front Benches.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he and his officials deserve congratulations on coming to the House so soon with this comprehensive scheme?

First, may we assume that egg producers who have already culled their hens will be covered by the scheme? Secondly, and more importantly, will my right hon. Friend look at the scheme again with a view to extending it if, at the end of four weeks and after the culling of 10 per cent. of the flock, the situation continues to be bad?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I am sure that he will appreciate that a scheme of this sort usually takes months to complete correctly, and we have had to do it in a few days. Inevitably, there must be an element of rough justice if we are to get it into operation quickly.

As to whether egg producers who have already been affected will be covered, the thrust of the scheme, both on the egg and the laying hen side, is to deal with the present market and to get back to a more stable basis to enable the market to adjust to present demand. So we cannot get the payments through to every producer. By dealing with the problem, we shall, I hope, restore to the market as much stability as possible, which will mean that all egg producers, including those who have already been affected, will benefit. In that indirect sense, they are covered.

I cannot give my hon. Friend an assurance that I shall re-examine the situation after four weeks. I have said that we are faced with an exceptional circumstance in the market, and this scheme is designed in its totality to deal with that.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I am sure I am not the only hon. Member who is bemused at the sight of the Minister tackling the overhang of eggs.

Further to the question asked by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), will the Minister clarify an important point? Is it right that no one who has culled birds until now and no one who has taken eggs off the farm at rock bottom prices until now will benefit from the compensation? Is it only a future scheme?

As a matter of long-term policy, since we cannot open a newspaper nowadays without reading about some food or other that is dangerous to eat, will the Ministry, in the context of lower food production in Europe, encourage a return to more natural and less artificial means of production, especially in feedstuffs?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first point, what I meant by "overhang" is fairly clear. I meant that there is a significant surplus of eggs on the market which affects all egg producers at present—and all those with flocks. That is the problem that I am addressing. Payments will not be made to producers who have already culled flocks. One cannot do that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I do not think it would be right to do that. We have moved with great speed. But all producers who have had to take action already and who are in a difficult position will benefit from these measures indirectly, and much more than if we had not taken them.

I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman about food. A good deal more of my Department's resources is now devoted to ensuring food safety and to dealing with all these aspects. However, the right hon. Gentleman's reference to more natural feeds needs to be taken in context. With regard to salmonella, free-range eggs are no different from battery hen eggs.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will my right hon. Friend calm fears outside the House that, because so many hens have already been slaughtered and hen producers have gone out of business, there may in future be a severe shortage of eggs, with the result that the price will increase considerably? I assure my right hon. Friend that no self-respecting housewife can do her job without a good supply of eggs in the kitchen.

Mr. MacGregor: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend's closing remarks. I hope that housewives will continue to buy eggs exactly as they have in the past, taking note of the chief medical officer's advice and using normal hygiene practices in the kitchen. That is the best way to ensure that the industry remains viable, as all of us would wish it to be.

On existing producers, the plain fact is that we have acted as quickly as possible. A scheme like this has never been introduced as quickly before. The scheme is the best way of helping existing producers.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Has the Minister seen reports that some egg producers are keeping hens at low temperatures in the dark for most of the day? Will he confirm that that is in breach of his Department's welfare codes for battery hens? Will he urgently remind producers of that and of the fact that if they disregard the codes they are open to prosecution?

Mr. MacGregor: All producers should abide by the welfare codes.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that this problem was caused by misinformation and by the incompetence of a Minister? Does he accept that those who have suffered should be fully compensated and that his statement is totally unsatisfactory?

Mr. MacGregor: I have come forward very promptly with measures to assist the egg industry, and I have done everything that I can to get over the facts about eggs and to reassure the public about all the measures that we have taken and the measures that they should take.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): In view of the Minister's clear admission that there were more than 1,000 cases of salmonella food poisoning associated with eggs in the first 10 months of this year, and in view of his Department's admission that in 1987 no less than 28 per cent. of imported animal protein was affected by salmonella, will the Minister tell us on what date he first warned Parliament and the country about the dangers of salmonella?

Mr. MacGregor: The chief medical officer issued the advice on 26 August, and since then I have been taking steps to deal with the problem. It is important to keep these matters in context. There have always been cases of food poisoning caused by salmonella. It exists in most other countries, too, and we have tried to do all that we can to reduce it. The number of cases to which the right hon. Gentleman referred should be contrasted with the fact that the British people have been consuming 30

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million eggs a day. The vast majority of people, taking the normal precautions that everyone takes, have been eating eggs perfectly safely.

I accept that we must tighten the rules on importing food protein, and that is what I am doing. But, subject to checking, I believe that none of that protein contained the salmonella enteritidis strain that has caused the present difficulty.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Further to the point raised by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), does my right hon. Friend accept that I have made no allegation? Does he agree that egg producers are worried by two external hygiene factors over which they have no control? First, they are concerned about what the feed manufacturers do. So long as some of the manufacturers put into their compounds bits and pieces of dead animals, surely they should contribute to the £17 million that the taxpayer will have to pay.

Secondly, many egg producers are concerned about what is now going on in hatcheries and whether drugs such as tylosin, which are extensively used to suppress salmonella and other diseases, are continuing to work. Will my right hon. Friend consider this matter urgently?

Mr. MacGregor: We have been urgently considering these matters. Protein processing plants must abide by the conditions of the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981. We have increased the amount of inspection and monitoring and such plants are now being inspected by my officials on a regular three-monthly basis, in addition to any monitoring that they do themselves. Where salmonella contamination is found in any of the plants' production, a notice is served on the plant, requiring it to ensure that all the product conforms with the required bacteriological standard, which means no salmonella within a specific time, after which a reinspection visit takes place. I am seeking to tighten those measures.

However, one of the problems to which I referred earlier is that salmonella strains can enter through the environment, for example, through wild birds. They are sometimes difficult to eradicate in plants and lorries, so there is always the problem of reinfection which no country has yet been able to find a way of overcoming. I am anxious that we should do everything possible in that connection, and I have discussed the matter with Ministers in other countries. My vets are in regular contact with scientists in other countries, but the problem remains.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the Minister tell us what the destruction of eggs means? Can he guarantee that none of the affected eggs will be recycled? Is he aware that it costs producers about £90 to produce a certificate saying that their eggs are salmonella-free? What assistance will he give to producers for such certification, what help will he give to retailers who have been badly hit by these problems, and will he introduce a programme of salmonella eradication for the poultry industry in general?

Finally, as the Minister is responsible for fisheries, is he aware of the massive destruction of the fishing industry by quota cuts? Will he introduce a similar rescue package for fisheries?

Mr. MacGregor: Destruction means that the eggs will be destroyed or incinerated mainly in local authority plants. They will not be recycled. This measure is directed at the immediate needs and, therefore, is the right one.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Has the Minister considered carefully the calamitous position of the egg industry in Northern Ireland? Will he confirm that, whatever may be said of the industry in the rest of the United Kingdom, it has a clean bill of health in Northern Ireland? Has he considered the fact that, when this country joined the EEC, the egg industry in Northern Ireland had a laying flock of 10 million? It is now 3·3 million and is down to rock bottom. Does he realise that 1,000 jobs in the industry and 2,500 jobs that spin off from the industry are at stake in Northern Ireland? May I insist today on compensation for those who have already culled their flocks and stress that they will be exasperated by not receiving it?

Mr. MacGregor: The measures that we have taken are the most practical; they are right. It is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but I believe that the hon. Gentleman's comment about salmonella enteritidis in Northern Ireland is correct. The measures that I have taken today are designed to assist the industry in the current market situation in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): The Minister must be aware that he has shown scant concern for the 1,000 people or more who have been certified as suffering from salmonellosis as a result of the ingestion of eggs and for the many who died as a result of the disease. Is he now prepared to accept the departmental responsibility for the shameful cover-up that has occurred in this country for years over the extent of salmonellosis in poultry flocks? If not, is he prepared to do the honourable thing and resign, like the former Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)?

Mr. MacGregor: There has been no cover-up. We have been absolutely clear about this matter, and I have taken the action that I believe is now required. There has been no complacency.

The hon. Gentleman's question about deaths raises a very complex matter. None of the 26 deaths recorded in the public health laboratory service figures can be directly attributed to eggs or poultry. However, the balance of probability is that a proportion will be. It is not clear that only egg infection has resulted in a death. The matter is very complex and it is difficult to get figures. However, the deaths are not on the scale, by a long way, that some people have suggested.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is creating an expensive precedent because consumers may decide, on grounds of hygiene or safety, not to buy many products? With regard to restoring confidence, is my right hon. Friend aware that many people will believe that a voluntary code of practice, given the industry's history, is not satisfactory? There should be a statutory code of practice.

Mr. MacGregor: Clearly I considered my right hon. Friend's first point very carefully. Knowing my interest in achieving value for money, I am sure that my right hon. Friend realises that I considered it very carefully. I

concluded that, in the exceptional circumstances facing the industry now, it was right to take these measures. The measures are limited absolutely to the exceptional circumstances and to the state of the market partly to ensure that they are not regarded as a precedent.

It was necessary to produce a new code of practice for the industry to deal with the kind of situation that we could see resulting from salmonella enteritidis about which we have held urgent talks with the industry. The matters are complex, and we decided that it was important to get the code of practice out quickly. That was arranged, and the first code of practice came out on 5 December. That does not rule out a statutory code. It was important to get the arrangements in place quickly. It is clearly in the industry's interests to follow the arrangements, and it has assured us that it will. I agree with my right hon. Friend that we should consider urgently, as we are doing at the moment, which parts of the code could be made statutory.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I recognise the plight of egg producers and the Government's deplorable record on research in food hygiene, but will the Minister clear up the confusion that has arisen from the Government's advertisement? Is he aware that thousands of housewives have already made their Christmas cakes and many of them will have used marzipan and icing containing raw eggs? Is he also prepared to reassure the House about these matters because commercial food producers do not appear to be mentioned and appear not to use raw eggs in the manufacture of marzipan and royal icing? Is there not confusion which would justify yet another expensive advertisement in the national press?

Mr. MacGregor: Commercial producers of those substances and of things like mayonnaise use pasteurised eggs, which are safe. They are obliged to use such eggs to ensure that their products are safe and are not included in the warning about raw eggs. Housewives should be careful about using raw eggs in the home.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I give a warm welcome to the measures announced this afternoon by my right hon. Friend, and I assure him that his statement will be seen by egg producers as a meaningful gesture to sort out an awful situation which was not of their making. Does he agree that it is very much in the consumers' interests that the measures should be taken, because without them there is no doubt that the supply of eggs would end and the price of eggs would probably go through the ceiling?

Did my right hon. Friend read the front page article in this week's *Mail on Sunday* which said that 573 eggs had been purchased in 106 different outlets but none was found to contain salmonella? Does he agree that it is probably true to say that more poisoning takes place in the home than in the food chain?

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that my hon. Friend concentrated on the consumers' interest, because that has been uppermost in our minds. It ought to be borne in mind that the industry has no interest in not carrying through all the advice, recommendations and our statutory conditions because very few products depend more on return sales than eggs. It is therefore essential that we minimise all the risks from eggs. Today's measures have been taken very much in the consumers' interests.

In reply to the previous question I said that housewives should be careful about using raw eggs. Of course they should not use raw eggs in uncooked food. I want to make that correction. We have said that throughout, and I want to make that absolutely clear.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I do not believe that the Minister's statement today will solve the egg industry's problem. The Government are telling us not to eat soft-boiled eggs and not to give them to babies or frail people. That means that there is something deeply wrong. Today the Minister has given some money to egg producers, but he has not made it conditional for them to clean up their act.

I do not believe that the decline in egg sales has anything to do with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). People know now that there is deep infection in the egg industry. They will not buy eggs in the numbers that they used to until we are assured that the industry has been cleaned up. Has the Minister seen the front page of *The Guardian* today which contains an article in which Professor Richard Lacey, of Leeds university, says that one person a week may be dying and 3,000 people a week may be affected by eggs? The Minister speaks too much for the farmer. Most of the people in this country are consumers, and they are not satisfied.

Mr. MacGregor: I absolutely reject the charge that I speak only for the farmer. I have paid every bit as much attention to the consumer. I see the interests of the farmer and the consumer as being identical because the one very much depends on the other. I reject that charge absolutely.

With regard to egg infection, I plead with the hon. Lady and all Opposition Members who have referred to the workers in the industry to get this into perspective. There are problems of food poisoning in most foods if people do not take the proper precautions. There have always been problems in many other areas of human activity. The risk in relation to eggs is very small indeed and it can be made very much smaller—minuscule—if the appropriate steps are taken according to the chief medical officer's advice.

Although it is not a matter directly for me, I have not seen figures to confirm what the hon. Lady has said. I have given the figures from the public health laboratory service. They are the official Government figures available to me. It is important that people return to a proper sense of perspective and balance. As with all other food, that involves taking the proper steps in the kitchen, and the chief medical officer's advice has been directed to that.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): The speed of my right hon. Friend's statement this afternoon will be greatly welcomed in Shropshire where business men, as well as egg producers, are at risk. Many vital jobs that they provide in rural areas are threatened. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House about the exports of British produce and the safeguards to prevent unfair continental competition exacerbating a problem which it ill-behoves hon. Members to blow out of proportion?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The answer is yes.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Minister accept that his statement is no help to small egg producers who have already had to cull perhaps half or more of their flocks? How on earth can they benefit from today's announcement? Why is it not possible for the Minister to

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backdate for two weeks compensation or payments available for culling to help those people? Has he taken advice from the Law Officers about the liability of the Government or individual Ministers to compensation payments through the courts for people who have undoubtedly suffered and who will receive nothing from today's announcement?

Mr. MacGregor: I make it clear, as I did on Friday, that the arrangements imply no acceptance of legal liability on the Government's part. I have naturally been concerned about the position of small producers, but one must consider the practical problems of bringing help quickly. There are 35,000 producers and 3,100 egg packers, and that is why it is practical and sensible to concentrate payments on egg packers. In the time available, I tried to think matters through as much as was humanly possible. Both measures combined are directed at the real problems, which are the surplus of eggs in the market and the risk of continuing surplus if the flock remains at its present size —which is the reason for the second measure. Both are designed to bring stability back to the market, which is the best way of helping the small producer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the monitoring of imported eggs, where it appears from his remarks the risks are equivalent but the new safeguards and codes of practice cannot apply?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have to consider that matter. I know that there are measures. I shall write to my hon. Friend about them.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Minister realise that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, not that most eggs are infected, but that most egg production is infected? Was she right or wrong?

As the Minister managed to find £17 million to give to egg producers, why was he unable to find any money for the fishing industry, which is affected by the same Department and which will lose out? The Government side of the House is infected with farmers; there is not a fisherman among them.

Mr. MacGregor: That simply is not the case. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, from the evidence available to me, it is not the case that most egg production is infected. What is clear from all the evidence that we have been able to gather—and this is the important point from the consumer's point of view and therefore the one that I stressed—is that most eggs are not infected. That is the risk that concerns the general public, and that is why I have been saying throughout, to reassure the general public, that it is not the case. I thought that the whole House would wish me to give such an assurance in order to assist the industry and to reassure the general public about eggs. That is what the advertisement is designed to do.

The hon. Gentleman knows that we fought extremely hard, and very successfully, to get the best possible deal for the fishing industry this year. As a result of the whole package, the white fish industry's quotas are down by about 10 per cent. on the total catch that it was allowed for the same white fish this year. We do not know what market prices will be next year, but they may rise.

Mr. Speaker: I ask right hon. and hon. Members to restrict their questions to eggs, and not to deal with fish.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his swift and excellent rescue package both for egg and poultry producers and for the consumer alike. However, in the interests of accuracy, both in the House and in advertising, will my right hon. Friend encourage the chief medical officer to come to me for a cookery lesson—in public, not in private? Clearly, he does not know that pasteurisation of egg yolks, which occurs in three seconds at a temperature of 92 deg. C, destroys all salmonella without destroying the eggs' emulsifying properties—thus enabling one to make home-made mayonnaise, ice cream and mousses, and to use bought marzipan, without risk to babies, old people, and the healthy and unhealthy alike? Is that not a point worth knowing?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Her culinary knowledge is superb, and her point about pasteurised liquid eggs is absolutely right. Her remarks illustrate the difficulty of getting over the whole message, when only small parts of it are extracted for headline treatment. It has been difficult to get over the message about pasteurised eggs. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments, because she has made the position absolutely clear in respect of mayonnaise, marzipan and everything else bought in the shops.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman say why his statement dealt only with assisting the egg industry and made no reference to safeguarding public health? Will he say how many prosecutions his Department is bringing where salmonella has been found to exist? Will he reinstate the Bristol research that he stopped? What advice is he giving local authorities as to the disposal of carcases? How much longer will we have to wait before there is an integrated food health and agriculture policy?

Mr. MacGregor: I made it absolutely clear that I take very seriously my responsibilities in respect of food, and more of my Department's resources are being devoted to that end. Clearly the hon. Lady was not listening, because in my opening statement I commented on three health measures. We have been engaged in an intensive series of discussions leading to a health action programme, ever since we had information about the new and growing strain of salmonella in question. There has been important research and development undertaken at Bristol, but the research related to the particular inhibition—which it is —in question has been completed, and the next key stage is commercial exploitation. It is that which is being followed up.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the measures he has announced. The egg producers of Suffolk will be grateful as a result. Clearly there is a great problem to be tackled, but does my right hon. Friend agree that there has been massive over-reaction? Does he agree also that it has created confusion in the minds of many people? I urge him to try to establish, as a matter of priority, the precise scientific and medical facts so that complete confidence may be restored to the general public and the future of a very important industry guaranteed.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that there has been considerable over-reaction. We are endeavouring to get the facts over and to put the whole matter into perspective. That is extremely important, for both consumers and the industry. However, when individual little items come out all the time, it is difficult to respond immediately to each and every one of them. That is why we are trying to put across the basic and fundamental facts. That is most important, and I assure my hon. Friend that I shall endeavour to find every possible further way of achieving that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I have not been able to call all right hon. and hon. Members who wished to put questions. There will be other opportunities later this afternoon and this evening.

Rate Support Grant

4.17 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the rate support grant report for 1989-90, and supplementary reports for 1985-86 to 1988-89, which have today been laid before the House and which signal the end of the present system and the move to our major reform of local government finance. I am also announcing today in a written answer my decisions on the applications I have received from rate-capped authorities for a redetermination of their expenditure levels and my decisions on proposed rate limits.

In July, my right hon. Friend designated seven authorities for rate capping in 1989-90 and set expenditure levels for them. I have looked very carefully at the applications that five of those authorities made for redetermination of their expenditure levels. I have concluded that Camden, which is overspending by £216 for every adult, does not need any increase in its expenditure level. Tower Hamlets may spend £1 million more, provided that it establishes proper central financial control; and Greenwich £2 million more, but that will be linked specifically to improved performance on social services—particularly concerning children at risk. Hackney also will be able to spend £2 million more, and Southwark £6 million—but on condition that they make improvements in their rent collection procedures and in other financial matters. Thus, I am linking those extra resources with conditions directed towards the areas of greatest inefficiency in those boroughs.

As a result I have been able to set proposed rate limits for all the capped authorities. On average, the overall local rates for those authorities will be cut by 11 per cent. giving a total saving in bills for the ratepayers of some £46 million. It is now for each authority either to accept its proposed limit or to make representations for a different limit. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is today announcing his decision on ILEA's application for a redetermination of its expenditure level and its proposed precept limit.

In July my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the main elements of our proposals for next year's RSG settlement. In November a consultation paper was issued which set out full details of the proposals and gave authorities details of their provisional grant entitlements. The main elements of the proposals were that provision for local authority current expenditure should be £29,140 million—an increase of 8·6 per cent. above the 1988-89 settlement, after adjusting for the transfer of polytechnics which from 1 April 1989 will be the responsibility of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. The provision is 4·8 per cent. above the amount that authorities have budgeted to spend this year, and broadly in line with the GDP deflator.

Next year taxpayers will provide £13,575 million in grant towards local authority services—£1,100 million more that this year. The amount of grant next year will be increased by 9 per cent., a substantial addition. Grant next year is therefore being set at a generous level and will, as a result of the Rate Support Grants Act 1988, be paid out in full. I hope that hon. Members will accept that the package as a whole is fair and reasonable. For next year we propose that there should be no major changes to the

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mechanisms for block grant distribution, and that the methodology for assessing needs should be amended only to take account of the transfer of polytechnics and the costs of preparing for the introduction of the community charge. Finally, we propose that there should be a safety net equivalent to 5p at ratepayer level to limit certain year-on-year grant losses which might otherwise have resulted.

As usual, we have received comments from the local authority associations and representations from about 110 local authorities on the 1989-90 settlement. That is substantially less than in some previous years. It is not possible to produce a settlement that pleases everyone, and inevitably some authorities have done less well than they hoped. However, the lower level of response can, I think, reasonably be interpreted as indicating a broader level of contentment than we have achieved in previous years. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) seems to be suggesting that I cannot come to that conclusion. Let me remind him that he came to the opposite conclusion in previous years. He said that everyone was complaining, and that the results were therefore not very good. Now that we receive very few complaints, he says that we cannot interpret this as a very good result. The hon. Gentleman should not make comments from a seated position and expect not to be listened to. He should not make such comments if he wants me to stick to my statement.

There has been a widespread welcome for the certainty about grant entitlements which the Rate Support Grants Act provides, as grant will no longer vary with expenditure and the full amount of grant available will be paid out. We have considered carefully the comments and representations that have been made. We have responded to a number of particular points that authorities have made to us, but otherwise there are no significant changes. The settlement proposals represent a fair and reasonable balance.

Details of grant entitlement are today being sent to all authorities, and copies will be placed in the Library. The grant entitlement for most authorities has changed marginally from those shown in the consultation paper. That is a result of later information on rateable values, later information used in the assessment of needs and revised estimates of specific grants. Overall, local authorities' block grant entitlements have increased by £27 million. The amount of aggregate Exchequer grant remains £13,575 million.

If authorities spend in line with the expenditure provisions made in the rate bill settlement, increases on average need be only 2 per cent. Obviously for some authorities that will not be possible, but this year the extra grant will, and must, keep down rate increases. The settlement as a whole is therefore good news for local government and for ratepayers.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Minister cuts an unlikely Father Christmas figure. What his statement really means is that the average unrebated domestic rate bill is likely to exceed £500 in 1989-90. It is already £468, compared with £131 when Labour left office in 1979. That £500 figure is only the average; for those in both Labour and Tory boroughs who pay more than that the increase will be much more painful.

Why does the Minister bring his office into disrepute by dressing up the figures, when it would be more honest to restate the Government's determination to cut local authority expenditure regardless of the consequences? The cumulative loss of rate support grant since 1979 is £22 billion. That is why local authorities—Labour and Tory—are complaining so bitterly about Government policies. The Government are trying their old trick of pretending that they have not been cutting the block grant, which decides the individual's rate bill, while marginally increasing the aggregate Exchequer grant which pays for Government-related expenditure on, for instance, the police and the fire brigade.

We want answers to several questions. First, will the Government increase rate support grant to take into account the estimated increase in inflation from its present 6·4 per cent. to 7 per cent. next year? Secondly, for the past four or five years the Government have underestimated the effect of cuts in rate support grant—not least, I might add, because of Government-inspired inflation with the increases in water and energy costs. Has the Minister got his sums right this year, or will there be another underestimate?

Thirdly, let us bear in mind that, although the Secretary of State said that rates would go down last year, in many areas—particularly Tory areas—they went up by as much as 40 per cent. The Minister may remember my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) reading out a list of areas—Tory area after Tory area—with increases of 30 or 40 per cent. What guarantee can be given to either Labour or Tory authorities that rates will not rise again because of the Government's mismanagement?

Fourthly, as the Minister has now begun to give a little extra money to rate-capped councils, can he tell us how many local authorities will have their poll tax capped? Finally, is the Minister not trying to lessen the pain of the poll tax by trying to force up the rates now, so that the difference seems slightly less painful when the poll tax is introduced? Nevertheless, people will still remember that the poll tax is a Tory tax.

The Government will continue to try to undermine local democracy and the morale of councillors and council officers alike. What they cannot do is hide the effect of their actions from the public, who can see through the Government's philosophy of private affluence for some and public squalor for all.

Mr. Gummer: It is very difficult to take such comments seriously when we have just announced a grant increase of 9 per cent., and when we have said clearly that the average rate increase that is necessary as a result of the announcement is 2 per cent.—considerably below the inflation rate. It is also extremely difficult to take the hon. Gentleman's comments seriously when he has not understood the position regarding the GDP deflator, which we and others have used in these circumstances and which is taken into account in the figures announced today. It is even more difficult to take seriously the comments of someone who represents some of the most overspending authorities in the country.

There is a very simple way in which rates can be brought down: by Labour authorities spending as they need rather than much more than they need, as they do now. If local authorities under Labour control collected their rents, for example, they could cut their rates. They

could cut their rates if they ran their systems efficiently. As we revealed last week, had we put the community charge in place this year it would be £100 per person more expensive to live in a Labour borough than to live in a Conservative borough. That is because Labour authorities are in general less efficient.

As for the hon. Gentleman's comments about the community charge, if we were trying to force up rates we would not produce 9 per cent. extra in grant, nor would we be able to announce that the average rate increase need be only 2 per cent. I do not mind being accused of being devious, but to be accused of being both incompetent and devious seems to me to be a wholly unacceptable accusation. We are neither incompetent nor devious. The figures are clear and the hon. Gentleman is wrong.

There is no need to rate-cap any authority that spends sensibly. A large number of authorities—but now many fewer—do not spend sensibly. Camden, for example, spends 47 per cent. above its class average. That local authority has been rate-selected for the fifth successive year because its spending is 30 per cent. above its needs. How can we do anything but try to hold the rate down for the people who live in Camden? Old, poor and vulnerable people in Camden are being killed every day because of the effects of Camden's rate increases. Unless we hold the rate down, those people will find it impossible to pay their rates. I very much hope that we shall not have to rate-cap any authorities, but it is for Labour local authorities to decide whether they intend to charge too much for the services that they provide.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am sure that my right hon. Friend has struck a fair balance by increasing the rate support grant by £27 million nationally, but I fear that I have to inject a sour note on behalf of the two rural districts in my constituency, Lewes district council and the Wealden district council. My hon. Friend and political neighbour, the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), shares my concern. They have been treated in a way that is quite incomprehensible compared with the nation as a whole and the adjacent borough authorities. My right hon. Friend knows that there is immense concern in those authorities. I hope that the figures—I do not have them yet to hand—will reflect a change of heart on my right hon. Friend's part for 1989-90. Whatever the outcome for 1989-90, is my right hon. Friend able to reassure me that that will not be the base that is used for whatever the rate support grant is to be called after the community charge is introduced? That would be doubly unfair.

Mr. Gummer: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. The new grant will be called the needs grant. It will be based upon the needs of the local authority rather than upon any previous spending pattern. If we take together the effect of the arrangements that we have announced today on Lewes and Wealden and on East Sussex, it should mean that the Lewes district council could cut its rate by 2 per cent. and that the Wealden district council could cut its rate by 4 per cent. When my hon. Friend looks at the figures I think that he will see that, overall, his area has been very well treated.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Minister not accept that the figures that he has not given us are those that show that the Government contribution to local authority services in the next financial year will increase by only 4·6 per cent., which is substantially less than the rate of inflation, and that the overall Government contribution to local authorities will be down to about 43 per cent., which is 3 per cent. less than this year—a real cut in both cases? As this is the first time, to my recollection, that the right hon. Gentleman is imposing conditions on local authorities—I do not object to those at all—will he in return make sure that they have the money that they really need and that they have asked for to implement the community charge? If, lastly, as a result of the court case that affects Southwark and its social services, we see that there is a substantial need for additional investment there, may I come back to the right hon. Gentleman on that specific constituency matter?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that I cannot comment on the court case, but he is always welcome to come and see me on any constituency problems and I shall listen most carefully to him. I think that his point about rate-capped authorities is met by the fact that, by law, I have to look carefully at all the factors that affect each of those authorities. As a result of doing so, I have produced these figures. Many of the ties that I have imposed on those local authorities are designed to help them to make a number of difficult decisions over priorities. I think that the hon. Gentleman would agree that in a number of cases—not only in his own area but elsewhere—they were not unreasonable matters to which to draw attention. The whole basis of the law is that one has to take fully into account the ability to reach these ends and to spend at that level. That is why I have made this determination.

As to the hon. Gentleman's point about the amount that local authorities need for the community charge and the amount that they have asked for, he speaks as though the two were exactly the same. They are not. However, the settlement provides for about the same amount of money as local authorities have asked for. They asked for £107 million and they have got £110 million. There has been a change in the rate of inflation in the meantime, but in general it is the same amount as was asked for. We have also provided what the independent Price Waterhouse report suggested was a reasonable figure. It would not be possible to provide everything that every local authority said that it thought it might need for these activities. The hon. Gentleman would probably agree that that would be surprising. However, we have tried to provide a realistic amount, and I hope that local authorities will work within it.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that any objective person must view his statement with some pleasure? He has certainly gone out of his way to meet most of the problems. Certain local authorities, such as the East Devon district authority, will be able to hold their rates at exactly the same level as last year. The East Devon district authority has pursued that policy for many years with considerable success. It is a properly managed Conservative council. What will happen with the county rate heaven alone knows. However, may I ask my right hon. Friend to look again, with the authorities that have been co-operating with him, at the amount that they are able to spend out of the capital sum that they have obtained from selling council houses? My authority wants to spend more than has been allowed for by the Treasury.

[Sir Peter Emery]

It is the authority's money and it believes, having co-operated with the Government, that it ought to be allowed to do so.

Mr. Gummer: I very much respect my hon. Friend's points, but I am not sure whether all the receipts are, in all cases, the authority's money. Much of that money has come from things that have been sold, for which there was a Government grant in the first place. To a certain degree that money belongs to the district authority but also to a certain degree there is a wider remit. I shall look carefully at that point when we consider the new capital arrangements that will be announced in January.

I can reassure my hon. Friend that East Devon district authority should be able to keep its rate at the same level and that if Devon county council were to hold its rate at the same level it would be doing only what this settlement makes possible. If Devon county council does not hold its rate, it will be quite clear that it is not giving value for money. It is also clear that because of the spending in Devon during the last two or three years there ought to be some areas in which expenditure cuts should be made, if the county council were more prudent. However, under the resettlement, Devon county council should certainly be able to hold its rate at the present level.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): During the last four years the Rotherham metropolitan borough council has consistently suffered cuts in its housing investment programme. That has created grave housing problems. This year the council has been made responsible by this Government for buying back, under the Housing Act 1988, defective houses that were sold by other public bodies in my constituency. It is causing many problems. It is holding up vital housing programmes, such as those for the elderly and the single in the Rotherham metropolitan borough. Because of our problems, these cuts cannot continue.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have given a great deal of help in that direction, but if the hon. Gentleman feels that the Government have not looked sufficiently at Rotherham's problems I shall be very happy to consider them. I remind the hon. Gentleman that under the settlement that I have just announced it ought to be possible for the rates in Rotherham to be increased by no more than 3 per cent.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the rates in Derbyshire increase by more than the rate of inflation, bearing in mind that Derbyshire is already the highest-rated county in England, it will be solely the responsibility of the irresponsible and profligate leadership of the county council? Will my right hon. Friend further confirm that the first Government actually to cut the rate support grant was the last Labour Government?

Mr. Gummer: Under the settlement, Derbyshire ought to be able to cut its rate by about 6 per cent., the rate in Amber Valley should be able to go down by 4 per cent. and the rate in Erewash by 5 per cent. Derbyshire is being given a particularly favourable arrangement because we have removed the cap. Therefore, I very much hope that Mr. Bookbinder will take it as a personal offer and make sure that he cuts the rate this year.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Did the Minister really say that old people in Camden are being killed because of the impact of high rates? I am sure that the Minister said that, and I am sure that he will want to withdraw it. Quite frankly, that is a grotesque thing to say about any local authority. He must realise that Camden has some of the worst homelessness and social services problems in London, so it is really not surprising that it is unable to meet the Government's spending target. However, for the Minister to say that it is responsible for killing old people in that borough is grotesque, irresponsible and should be withdrawn immediately.

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to withdraw any such imputation. I am absolutely willing to withdraw it and the hon. Gentleman need not make all that humbug and noise about it. I am very sorry if that is what he took it to mean. He knows perfectly well that I was using that expression in a particular way and I am very sorry that it upset him. However, I am not sorry to say that Camden is perfectly able to provide proper services at considerably less cost. It is a badly organised and badly run local authority. That is why it spends 30 per cent. more than it should.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be considerable disappointment in my constituency of Langbaurgh? People will fail to understand how, after representations to five different Ministers in four years, the Government have come up with two and a half times as much money for Stockton-on-Tees, four times as much money for Hartlepool, and, even allowing for the technical college, 10 times as much for Middlesbrough. Does the Minister think that the answer came out of the same multiplier of 1.0322304, and would it have been manifestly different if it had been 1.032303?

Mr. Gummer: It might not have been manifestly different, but it would have been less accurate. I know the problem. Any local authority looking at its neighbours will feel that it should have as much money as those neighbours when it has considered and measured their needs. However, we have to apply certain national methods of trying to measure people's needs. What we give to Stockton and what we give to Langbaurgh is based upon needs which are assessed not by me but by some objective standards and criteria, from which one cannot move.

That is how we do it. My difficulty is that it does not help Suffolk very much and I am not terribly able to help Suffolk Coastal, but I cannot change the statistics to fit our constituencies. However, on the basis of the settlement, it should be possible for Langbaurgh to keep its rate increases to within 2 per cent. That does not seem unreasonable in the present circumstances, and I hope that my hon. Friend will encourage his local authority to recognise that next year when we move to a better system and when we have a new method of assessing needs, if there is some reality in the argument of his local authority, it may well be reflected there. I cannot promise him that we will move from an objective to a subjective system, although, like my hon. Friend, I sometimes wish that we could, because then I could help Suffolk Coastal rather more.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Did the Minister say that he was ordering an 11 per cent. cut in the rates of

rate-capped authorities? If he said so, is that a standard figure for all the rate-capped authorities and how did he reach that figure? Secondly, what figure did he use for inflation? It is well known that local authority inflation is much higher than national inflation.

Mr. Gummer: I deny that the second factor is well known. It is actually not true and it is not acceptable. Local authorities have much more control over their own spending. They can decide their level of staffing and service, and they also do much of the negotiations for wage increases, so they have very direct control over their costs. If the hon. Gentleman had been here, he would have heard me say that the effect of the implied change in local rates of the rate-capping which I announced ranged around a whole series of figures. For example, in Tower Hamlets it might well mean a cut of 46 per cent. and in Greenwich there would be a rate increase of 10 per cent., so it is not a fixed figure. It depends on what expenditure level is set. Therefore, I have explained it very clearly.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will notice that the effect of the settlement on his own borough of Haringey should mean that Haringey could cut its rate by 6 per cent. I hope that he will encourage it to do that, because Haringey needs to give something back to the people living in that authority by way of the quality of the service it provides and value for money in providing that service.

Mr. Bernie Grant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister implied that I was not here during his statement. I have been here throughout these exchanges and I ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether that was said.

Mr. Gummer: I apologise if I implied that.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I thank my right hon. Friend's Department for its work in the past in holding down the rates in spendthrift boroughs. Part of my constituency is covered by Basildon council which is known as "Moscow on the Thames" for its politics and as the "Rockefeller foundation" for the way in which it doles out public money to all and sundry. Two constituents who came to my surgery at the weekend pointed out that Basildon is threatening a rate increase of more than 40 per cent. because it had previously been rate-capped and kept below the required figure. How will those families manage and what will the Government do should Basildon impose such an increase? A family currently paying £200 a month in rates would simply have to move house in order to manage in future. How will my right hon. Friend's announcement help those people?

Mr. Gummer: As a result of the settlement Basildon ought not to increase its rate at all. That is what the settlement implies. Therefore, if it increases its rate, local people will know that that will be because it is providing a greater number of services, or because it is overspending. It will be for local people to decide which explanation applies. Under the community charge, it will be very much more clear when a local authority is spending beyond its needs or when it is spending more than its neighbours. The electorate will have a much clearer understanding of the accountability of its local authority and I suspect that Basildon will have to think very carefully, in a way that it has not had to do until now, as to whether it is sensible to spend ratepayers' money in the way in which it has in the past. Therefore, I am sure that my hon. Friend will use her undoubted publicity abilities—I shall not apologise for that—to make sure that people in Basildon know that there need be no rate increase and that in neighbouring Thurrock the increase could be kept to about 2 per cent.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister assure the House that the settlement has taken fully into account soaring interest rates under the present Government which have imposed large increases in charges on local authorities? Will the rate support grant settlement for Bradford mean that Bradford city council will be sufficiently confident about the future not to sack 13 remedial teachers, as it has it in mind to dispose of their services at the end of the year? Will it be able to embark on a building programme to replace at least some of the 500 temporary classrooms which accommodate school-children in Bradford ? Some of those classrooms are so old that the money allocated for permanent buildings is being used to repair temporary classrooms, and that seems a funny priority.

Mr. Gummer: Lest he feels that I have been particularly favourable towards Bradford, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that Bradford is in the same position as Derbyshire. Because of the removal of rate capping, Bradford should be able to reduce its rate by 6 per cent. as a result of the settlement. From what I understand of Bradford council's proposals, it ought soon to begin to enjoy the advantages of good housekeeping and value for money, for which it was elected and which, I believe, it will achieve. The hon. Gentleman will no doubt continue to provide examples of Bradford city council's activities and I am sure that I shall hear some as well. When the time comes, the electorate will make its decision.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend give some thought to the long-suffering ratepayers of Ealing? Does he agree that their rates ought to be reduced under this generous settlement? Ealing's rates increased by 65 per cent. in 1987 and were reduced by rate capping by 25 per cent. in 1988. We have been promised a rate increase of between 25 per cent. and 50 per cent., perhaps more, next year by the Labour council. Will the Minister confirm that the abolition of the police and equal opportunities unit would save £5 million tomorrow? Also, if people who had lived in the borough for a certain period or who had been born there were accepted as homeless by a restoration of residents' points, the high cost of homelessness would be reduced and people would be spared much suffering.

Mr. Gummer: I have a particular interest in the London borough of Ealing because I live there during the week. I noticed the enormous rate increase that occurred when the Labour party was elected, and I benefited from the cut in that rate increase when rate capping took place. This settlement should mean that Ealing can keep its rate increase to within 5 per cent.—rather than the sums mentioned by my hon. Friend—based on expected spending. Ealing borough council has undertaken a series of activities that are expensive for the ratepayer and he has only mentioned some of them. There is considerable scope for Ealing borough council to reduce its expenditure, improve its services and cut its rates.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): What has the Minister done about the injustice—to which I referred in

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a letter—under which Northumberland county council faces a £400,000 bill over and above the amount it has previously paid for advanced further education under the changed AFE arrangements? Bearing in mind that the Exchequer's share of the county's expenditure has gone down from 61 per cent. to 37 per cent. since 1981, what will the Minister do about it? I hope that he will not stray too far into party politics and will remember that his party is supporting mine in trying to ensure that the council is well run.

Mr. Gummer: I hope that I do not. Northumberland has a £1·8 million increase in its grant under the settlement. Therefore, the county should be responsible for an increase of about 6 per cent. In Alnwick, the increase would be 4 per cent., in Berwick it would be 7 per cent. and in Castle Morpeth it would be 2 per cent. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is talking about reasonable sums that are about the same as the rise in inflation. He should not be upset about that. The hon. Gentleman's point is perfectly reasonable. He knows that when we adjust for the payments for polytechnics that were previously carried by local authorities, the position is slightly distorted because some authorities are out of grant. That means that Northumberland feels that it is carrying more than it would otherwise. In those circumstances, local government will bear the same burden of the cost of polytechnics as it used to. That is not unreasonable.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his 9 per cent. increase will be greatly welcomed in Lancashire? What advice does he have for the Labour leaders of Lancashire county council who increased rates by 18 per cent. last year in areas of high unemployment, thereby increasing industry's costs and making it more difficult to attract new investment? What does he have to say to them about this settlement for next year's rate?

Mr. Gummer: Lancashire has made a point of encouraging enterprise and finding ways of bringing new firms to replace old jobs. If it kept its rate within the 2 per cent., which is what seems to be necessary, that would help jobs and enable west Lancashire, my hon. Friend's constituency, to keep its rate increase to about 5 per cent. That would be reasonable and it would help jobs in Lancashire. I am sure that my hon. Friend will want to explain that to the Labour leaders of Lancashire county council.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): In answering the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) the Minister criticised Derbyshire county council. The hon. Member for Amber Valley claimed that it was the highest rated shire county in the country. If one looks at the rateable value per head of population, which will be relevant to the community charge, one can see that it is not in that position. Would the Minister advise it to cut its education standards by destroying one of the best staff-student ratios in the country or should it increase the cost of meals which are provided efficiently and at the lowest cost of all shire counties?

Mr. Gummer: Derbyshire should do what any efficient local authority would do. It should see how many of its services could be better run by others in competition. It should not waste money by stamping, "Nuclear-free zone" on school writing paper. It should spend less money on the advertising procedures of Derbyshire county council, which seems particularly keen on advertising its leader. It should dispel public disquiet by saying on what terms Mr. Reg Race was taken on and removed as the chief executive of the county council and it might also explain why it was necessary to appoint a chief executive, or similar figure, who came from a party political background. It could do all that.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My right hon. Friend has already mentioned Suffolk, in which both he and I have an interest. He knows that it is far from being a profligate county. On the basis of today's statement, how will Suffolk county council and mid-Suffolk district council fare next year? What will their rate levels be, since they both feel that they are being treated unfairly yet again?

Mr. Gummer: The county council, which my hon. Friend and I share and which we believe to be a well-run local authority, is less happy than many about this settlement, partly because it feels that it should be possible for me to provide it with a better deal. Under this settlement it will be possible to keep the rate increase to about 5 per cent. In Ipswich, there will have to be about a 7 per cent. increase and in mid-Suffolk about a 5 per cent. increase. In other words, the increases will be about the same as the cost of living increase.

I know that that is a difficult answer for Suffolk. It feels that there should be an increase because of its prudence over the years. I have explained that the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) parallel those of my local authority but I have to say again that the purpose of changing to a needs grant is that it will help us to give according to the needs of local authorities rather than according to historic expenditure levels. We should give

"to each according to his needs."

That has always seemed to be a good phrase.

Members' Interests

4.58 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recalll that last Thursday I raised with you a matter concerning the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said that he would raise it as a matter of privilege. He has written to me and I have not yet replied. I am considering the matter.

Mr. Mullin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a result of my raising the matter on Thursday, I received today a letter from the hon. Member for Erewash which said:

"As a matter of courtesy I am advising you that I shall seek to raise this afternoon, on a point of order, your remarks last Thursday."

I am here but I am disappointed to see that the hon. Member for Erewash is not present. People will draw their own conclusion about that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman will be raising the matter on a point of order. It may be dealt with tomorrow.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I received a similar letter and am similarly disappointed that the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) is not present. With regard to remarks that you, Mr. Speaker, made following earlier exchanges, I informed the hon. Member for Erewash, albeit at short notice, that I would be raising this. I explained to the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that, following a long series of points of order, I had to leave the Chamber. I certainly did not intend not to hear him or mean any discourtesy to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks.

Child Protection

5 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its disgust and alarm at the spread of child abuse throughout the United Kingdom; welcomes the provisions contained within the Criminal Justice Act 1988 designed to protect children and to deter potential child abusers; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that the range of sentences available to the courts are regularly reviewed, are sufficient to enable the courts to deal effectively with those who commit offences against children, and strong enough to serve as a deterrent to those who may act towards a child in an unnatural way.

When Back Benchers win a little Front Bench time, as we have this afternoon, it is important to maximise the opportunity. I felt it important, just before Christmas—which is a time for children—to lay one or two markers and remind those who regard children in an unnatural way and might be potential child abusers of what might be in store for them. Unless they understand that, all the provisions that we pass are just a punishment. They will not be a deterrent unless we get across what will be in store for the child abuser.

Today, many more people are likely to be caught and charged than previously. Many more are much more likely to be convicted and receive a custodial sentence. It is not common knowledge, but life in prison is usually hell for such classified offenders.

The general deterrent effect of those elements is not easy to measure. The inference most commonly drawn from research studies is that the probability of arrest and conviction is most likely to deter potential offenders. Others believe that severity of sentence is the key to deterrence, but the poor quality of prison life should not be ignored. Taking all those elements together, anyone should think twice before touching a child in an unnatural way, be it physical or sexual.

Why are offenders more likely to be caught and charged today? Children find it much easier to tell because they have been listened to. We have got the message across to children that it is all right to tell, which is good. Friends, neighbours and grandparents are much more alert. School teachers watch for certain signs, and I shall give a few examples of such signs. It is a sign if a child who formerly was a chatterbox is sullen and withdrawn at school. Another is if, when they change for PE, they seem to have lost a lot of weight or are bruised. Teachers are much more alert to those signs.

Social services, voluntary support agencies and the police are working better as teams. Child care law has improved. The Children Bill, which I am sure will be amended, will help those at the sharp end—the field workers who must keep an eye on children at risk. Child protection is a high-risk business and we rely heavily on those in the field to detect, counsel and prevent abuse.

I should like to mention something that is bothering me, and it is the only time that I will be a little political, but I believe that child protection has all-party support. I am gravely concerned about jobs for the boys in social services. People throughout the country have fallen down on the job, but have been moved to other authorities, sometimes with grave results. It has happened at every level and goes right to the top. If a director shows lack of management skills and is criticised by his board he is unlikely to secure a directorship of an identical company,

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yet in social services potential problems are laundered between local authorities. I can give many examples, such as the former assistant director of the London borough of Brent, who is now the director of the London borough of Southwark. He was criticised in the Jasmine Beckford tragedy, and now a child has died in Southwark. I cannot go further because a court case is pending and it is sub judice, but I report that as a fact. This week, Manchester city council appointed the former director of Cleveland social services, who was criticised by the Cleveland inquiry, and deep concern has been expressed in Manchester. I want to lay down that marker because it is causing people concern and the position must be watched.

Why did I say that people are more likely to be convicted today? The Criminal Justice Act 1988 has led to an improvement, and under section 32, children under 14 are able to give evidence at court through a live television link. A pilot scheme has been operating in Bexley, but from 5 January the process will be accelerated to include selected courts. Many cases have broken down because a poor little child has had to look across court and face the person who abused him, which is tragic. Hon. Members must think of the poor little child who must face the person who has been awful to him. Most adults know that a court is not a nice place to appear, but what is it like for a child? The extension of the pilot scheme is wonderful news; it works well in America and I am sure that it will be a great success here. I congratulate the Home Office and the police on introducing it so quickly in the courts.

Committal proceedings in magistrates' courts are now designed to be less of an ordeal for children. A child may not be called as a witness, so the court can rely on the child's statement, which will spare the child. There are exceptions to cover the prosecution's needs, but by and large children will be spared from having to give evidence in magistrates' courts, which is wonderful.

Under section 34 of the Act, the requirement that the unsworn evidence of children must be corroborated has been abolished. Judges are no longer required to warn the jury about convicting the accused on the uncorroborated evidence of a witness simply because the witnesss is a child. As one would expect, the general rules on corroboration must still be respected, but it is a wonderful step forward. A child's unsworn evidence has now been put on the same footing as that of an adult, as long as the court is satisfied that the child is possessed of sufficient intelligence and understands the duty of speaking the truth.

Much more important is the fact that the unsworn evidence of one child may corroborate the sworn or unsworn evidence of another. The merit of that change is that evil paedophiles abuse a child not in front of an audience but in secret—which is why it is hard to obtain convictions—and often the only other witness is a child, so Parliament has straightened out that problem. We can see the net closing on abusers in a sensible way. I hope that that message will go outside Parliament. All would-be child abusers should understand that, with the advent of genetic fingerprinting, the net of detection and conviction is being drawn ever tighter.

Another matter in which I am interested is the examination of whether children's video evidence—that is, recorded first statements—could be another way forward. There is an advisory group under the chairmanship of Judge Thomas Pigot, Common Serjeant of the City of London. In his team are detective chief superintendent Anthony Kilkerr of the Metropolitan police, who has been closely involved with the Bexley experimental project in video recordings of interviews with children; Mr. Roy Parker, the assistant director of social services in Sunderland; Miss Anne Rafferty, a barrister with considerable experience in child abuse cases; and Ms. Jennifer Temkin, a lecturer in law at the London School of Economics and an expert on domestic violence. I cannot predict the result of their work, but I hope that they will move in the right direction.

In the American states that I have been in touch with, 80 per cent. of defendants change their pleas to guilty when the first video recording is shown. Sometimes they do so through remorse, and sometimes purely because they do not want such films to be shown in open court. For whatever reason, if we can get 80 per cent. to change their pleas to guilty, think how we shall spare the children. How can children be expected to remember everything when a case goes through committal proceedings and into the county court? How can we expect a child who is filling its head with new ideas every minute of the day—learning all the time—to remember the precise incidents that happened months ago? The system was loaded towards the child abuser. We have had to restore the balance. I cannot predict the result of the advisory group's work, but I hope and pray that it will give this a try. It is important.

The question whether video-recorded evidence should be readily admissible in court cases in which children are victims of abuse is complex. It is of paramount importance that anything that we do should be in the interests of child victims of such detestable crimes. In the wider interests of justice, we must guard against any risk of unwittingly increasing the stress and suffering to which the criminal process exposes child victims. At the same time, we must protect the right of the accused person to a full and fair trial.

Why did I say that people have a much greater chance of receiving a custodial sentence for tampering with children? Such is the public outrage that judges are tending to take a strong line when sentencing those convicted of child abuse, whether physical or sexual. Section 36(1)(b)(ii) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 allows the Attorney-General to refer a case to the Court of Appeal when it appears to him that the sentence handed down by the Crown court has been unduly lenient. The Court of Appeal will have power to quash the sentence and to replace it with

"such sentence as they think appropriate for the case",

in view of the sentencing powers which were available to the Crown court but which it did not use. That is a big step forward, particularly for people such as myself, who have had their hands smacked time and again for criticising judges. However, that practice has worked, because the good old Home Office has come up trumps. It is just what we wanted—just what we have been fighting for—and it is wonderful news.

I hope that parents, when they hear about the Bill, will be convinced that we are on the warpath today. Several Commonwealth countries follow this practice, and it works well.

There was a recent case in which a judge apologised for only being able to give the maximum sentence of two years for cruelty. A baby was so cruelly treated that it died. Section 45 of the Criminal Justice Act and the

corresponding provision for Scotland increase the maximum term of imprisonment for cruelty to children under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 from two years to 10 years. That is a wonderful step forward. That increased term of imprisonment followed the outrage surrounding that case.

Many cases have failed by a whisker to satisfy a jury that murder or manslaughter was intended. Defendants were then convicted of cruelty under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. Babies and children died from their batterings, and two years' maximum custodial sentence was the result. A term of 10 years' imprisonment is now available for offences committed after 29 September 1988. That is wonderful.

I mentioned that prison could be hell. As a humble Back Bencher, perhaps I am able to deal with this matter more easily than the Home Office can, as it must be cautious about what goes on inside prisons. Prisoners do not take kindly to child abusers. Sometimes, prisoners were victims in their younger lives, and the experience has sharpened their attitudes. Some think of their own children, and are pained that they are not free to protect them. That is important. They compare their sentences with those of child batterers and child sexual offenders and feel aggrieved. For that reason, at times certain prisoners must be placed under section 43 provisions for their own protection. Child abusers should get the message that that could mean solitary confinement. In some cases, it means being shut up only with other child abusers. It means a lack of exercise. They must be prevented from meeting other prisoners. They have little work. They cannot be sent off to the workshop. They have few privileges. For example, they cannot sit in television rooms with other prisoners. Life in prison is hell and restricted. It is time people got the message because the net is tightening.

The possession of child pornography is now a criminal offence. It was a defence to say that it was for a person's own use. The Bill will protect children, because children must be procured to produce such disgusting material. Child pornography corrupts adults and entices them to seek the real thing. We must reflect on how many children go missing or are murdered to satisfy the lust of paedophiles.

I have resisted the temptation to dwell on the growth of the occult and groups practising black witchcraft, devil worship, black magic and satanism, but work to deal with this growth is going on behind the scenes, and it is proceeding very well. Children are being delivered from the hands of such groups. It is evil, it is spreading, but many of us are fighting. I will not mar my speech by moving down that road today, but I shall return to that subject because it is worse than any hon. Member would dream.

We have also amended sentences for serious attacks on children. Murder, rape, grievous bodily harm and buggery now carry a maximum of life imprisonment. That is how it should be. Also, spouses of alleged child abusers can be compelled to give evidence against them. That is an important step. We are continually seeking to restore the balance between the child abuser and the child, so that, when cases go to court, there is at least a sporting chance of properly sorting out matters under the legal system.

For more than 10 years those of us who have actively been working with children and families have strongly believed that the 32 Acts on child care law have created unnecessary confusion. In recent years a number of documents—in 1984 the Select Committee report on children in care, the 1985 Jasmine Beckford report, the 1987 Kimberly Carlile report, the 1987 Tyra Henry report, the 1988 Cleveland report, and the 1987 Government White Paper entitled "The Law on Child Care and Family Services"—have drawn attention to the need for major reforms to meet the contemporary needs of children and assist social workers and others.

The Children Bill is, without doubt, the most important legislation dealing with children to be introduced for many years. The foundation stone on which the new child care framework is constructed is the welfare of the child, and that is right. Hon. Members will remember that the phrase "a child in trust" was used after the Jasmine Beckford case. It is wonderful that we have got that message here.

It is my honour to serve on the all-party parliamentary children's group. The group's chairman, Baroness Faithful, has gathered together a strong group of child care specialists and is working tirelessly to ensure that sensible amendments are tabled to the Children Bill. Children and families will have much for which to thank Baroness Faithful when they remember her work on this subject over many years. What are we up to behind the scenes? We are carrying out a detailed study of the Children Bill and trying to maximise the golden opportunity that it provides by suggesting helpful improvements. I do not expect that all of them will be taken on board, but the Bill will be far better than it is at the moment.

I have the Bill here, but I do not want to be accused of introducing it in the House. However, hon. Members may be interested to know that part I deals with general principles on child welfare, part II with orders in respect of children in family and other proceedings, part III with local authority support for children and families, part IV with care and supervision, part V with emergency protection, part VI with community homes, part VII with the organisation of voluntary homes, part VIII with registered children's homes and part IX with private fostering arrangements. The Bill contains about 80 clauses, but there are improvements to be made. I hope for improvements to protect the rights of grandparents, and I am sure that they will come.

Much work is being done by dedicated people and I am pleased about that. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated people working in the area of child protection and the wonderful fund-raising groups who support organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the National Children's Home, Dr. Barnardo's, Childwatch and other groups too numerous to mention. I do not know what we should do without them because they are wonderful organisations which are working hard to protect children.

I do not believe that extra financial resources are always the answer. I believe that the good management of existing resources, strict guidelines and first class communication with other interested agencies are the key, as long as Parliament produces the right framework—as we are, with the help of the Opposition. Of course, more resources will be required when the Bill is enacted and I am sure that provision has been made already for that. May I ask the Government to consider spending a little extra on television advertising late in the evening, pointing out the consequences of child abuse? I hope that the message will say, as I said earlier, that child abusers must recognise that they are far more likely to be caught and charged, far more

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likely to be convicted and far more likely to receive a custodial sentence and that prison will be hell. Some paedophiles may think that it is worth touching a child, but they will be for the high jump. If we have put that message across this afternoon, we have done well.

5.25 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): The House is grateful to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) for raising this matter. I agree, to some extent, with what he has said. It is a pity that we have not had a full debate on the Cleveland report and its implications, but we shall have a chance, during the passage of the Children Bill, to raise many of the matters that we could have discussed in a debate on Cleveland. Of course, I support most of the provisions in the Bill.

I do not want to fall out with the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth on any matter, but I am not convinced that the physical or sexual abuse of children is spreading. I believe that many more cases are being reported and, as the hon. Gentleman said, children have been given the confidence to come forward and complain, whereas in the past they did not have that confidence. The evidence does not show that there is any greater incidence of child abuse, but we now provide the facilities for people to come forward and there is greater vigilance by people who are working with children, enabling them to detect abuse.

I do not want to follow up the hon. Gentleman's comments on what happens, or what should happen, in prison. Our work is to find out why men abuse children —and it is, in the main, men. We do not know the full story and I am not convinced that simply to threaten people with long terms of imprisonment and violence in prison will necessarily deter them. The all-party parliamentary children's group heard evidence from a person who deals with sexual abusers and who put forward the theory that the sexual abuse of children is sometimes addictive behaviour. We have yet to solve the problem of how to deal with that. However, anything that deters such people is to be welcomed, if we ensure that they are deterred in the long term.

I am the last person to want to suggest that a person who has been sexually or physically abused as a child will grow up to be an abuser. However, I want to underline to anybody who saw the recent television programme in which violent men were interviewed that the main thread that ran through the history of all those violent men was that they had themselves suffered violence as small children. We must therefore consider carefully the treatment and therapy given to children who have been abused in any way. If we do not, there will be a minority —I stress the word minority—whom we shall later call all the foul names on which we can lay our tongues because they repeat the pattern. Such people are a minority, because most people successfully survive those early experiences.

Those of us who have been interested in the problem of child sexual abuse know that many adults now come forward and say how glad they are to talk about what happened to them when they were children. They have never talked about it before, but have managed to cope somehow. It would have been better if the facilities that we are now beginning to develop to treat abused children had been available for them. Some of the people who have disclosed the fact that they were abused as children have kept quiet for 30, 40, 50 or more years. If only the help and facilities had been available for them to come forward and complain, their lives might have been far happier.

That point brings me to the main reason why I wanted to take part in this debate. Through the Children Bill, and in other ways, the Government are moving towards providing greater protection for children and better training and help for those dealing with children. However, it is a pity that the Government did not decide on three-year training courses for social work. There are two other important points, which can be dealt with. I recently asked the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), when she was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, in a written question, what the Government were doing to ensure that undesirable people did not set up child-lines. That is an area that is wide open to abuse—so much so that Valerie Howarth of Childline wrote to the Department in March about the matter. That arose out of an incident at Childline when a person was making inappropriate contact, as she described it, with children through the use of the child-line facility. It was discovered that there was no way in which that individual—or any other who wished to use the telephone service in that way—could be prevented from doing so. The magazine *Social Work Today* also took the matter up. I should not simply have been brushed aside and told that there was no need for any protective measures but that if I knew of any cases I should report them to the police. It is not my job, and I do not have the facilities, to monitor the people who set up child-lines. The Government should be looking at some form of registration and monitoring system. Child-lines can do great and useful work with children, but they are open to abuse if the wrong people are on the end of the line. I hope that the Government will reconsider. As the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth said, this is not a party political issue; all of us are worried about what is happening to children.

The other day, I asked what the Government were doing to ensure that voluntary organisations dealing with children had access to the police records of those whom they employed. I believe that I am right in saying that it is four years since the recommendation was made, and that local authorities have the facilities—and have been helped —to gain access to the police records of those whom they may employ. I was told that a pilot scheme for voluntary organisations would be set up some time in the summer. There has been much foot-dragging on this matter, which has been raised with me by various voluntary organisations whose employees have direct contact with children.

Recently a man who was used by a local authority to foster children on a voluntary basis was found to have been abusing those children over a long period. When I was out of the House for four years, I was director of the trade union child care project, so I had a chance to consider these problems in detail. Anyone who has been involved in such matters will know the difficulties that organisations face in finding out the background of those whom they employ. Anyone who reads what has happened to children who have been removed from home because they have been sexually abused will know that occasionally —too often—those children are abused again by the very

people who are supposed to be protecting them. It would be foolish to say that that happens everywhere all the time; of course it does not. But there are instances. Having made it easier for the local authorities to gain access to the police records of people whom they may employ to care for children, we should help all voluntary organisations to ensure that potential employees have no record of abusing or interfering with children.

We shall never get it absolutely right; many people will get round any provision that we make and unfortunately there will always be new abusers coming on the scene. We can at least seek to ensure, however, that no one with a record of child abuse is appointed to care for children or put into a position of trust by them.

The answers that I received on the telephone counselling services and on the employees of voluntary organisations contradict the aims of the Children Bill and many of the positive steps that the Government have taken to try to deal with physical and sexual child abuse. It is important that we should vet those in contact with children as well as we can. Otherwise we shall be betraying the children who have been removed from their families because they have been abused—another betrayal of children by adults. It is no surprise to me that many youngsters who have suffered abuse two or three times grow up feeling that they can never trust an adult again because they are betrayed wherever they turn.

If we are to encourage children to say what is happening to them—the change in the climate has helped us to do that—we must ensure that help is available for them. I regret that we did not decide to extend the training period and I believe that we have much to do in that respect. Any child who has been physically, sexually or emotionally abused—although the last is perhaps a matter for another time—needs special help afterwards from a trained person. Children who do not get such help will have great difficulty in coping with their lives, particularly as they reach maturity. It is important that the people with whom children are placed should have proper training and should properly understand the difficulties and emotional problems that those children will face. Life will be tough enough for them anyway and we shall be betraying them if we do not place them with people who have the expertise and training necessary to deal with their problems.

5.35 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important subject and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) for initiating the debate, even if I would not perhaps have chosen exactly the same phrases he did.

My hon. Friend referred to the spread of child abuse, but, as the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said, we simply do not know the extent of child abuse. Until recently, child abuse was recorded only by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in child abuse registers and they probably accounted for less than 10 per cent. of cases. I warmly welcome the Government's establishment of a national child abuse register, although it will take time before that is fully operational and its records can be taken as accurate. As the hon. Member for Eccles said, the number of adults who told us following the establishment of Childline that they had been abused as children is proof that we do not know the full extent of child abuse. That abuse had been hidden for years. There is no way that we can know the extent of child abuse, and we must take the figures at face value.

I agree that we need a range of sentences for dealing with such offences, as the motion suggests. The House will recall the general philosophy behind sentencing: the aim is to punish the offender and show society's detestation of the offence committed. It is, if possible, to reform the offender, or at least, while he is in custody, to prevent the recurrence of the offence, and it is to deter others from committing similar offences.

In child abuse cases, there is a different element. I refer, of course, to the interests of the child. In some cases it may be best for the father to finish up in prison but in others counselling and family therapy may enable the family to stay together, which is a far better outcome. Let us also bear it in mind that the very prospect of a prison sentence for the father—who is often the abuser—may deter the child from disclosing the fact that he or she has been abused. We must take that into account. In any case, sentencing is only a small part of the battle against child abuse. One could argue that each sentence is an admission that society has failed in that case to protect the child. We must do all we can to try to prevent abuse from occurring in the first place.

One is expected to have some qualification or training for most things nowadays, but one exception is parenting: one does not even have to be married to be a parent. All of us who are parents know just how hard it is to bring up children—to cope with a crying baby, to nurse a sick child or to handle a difficult youngster. Parenting does not come easily or naturally, and we have recently had royal endorsement of that fact. We need training for parenthood, and that is the theme of the current NSPCC campaign "Putting Children First". The NSPCC is known for what used to be its inspectors, who were known colloquially as "cruelty men". The inspectors have now been replaced by child protection teams, and I emphasise the word "protection".

If I refer frequently to the NSPCC, it is because I have the honour to sit on its central executive committee. Perhaps I may add that I occupy a position once occupied by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, whose support for the society not only publicly but in many discreet ways belies the uncaring label so unjustly attached to her. The society appreciates the support of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, who is not present for the good reason that he is attending an NSPCC function in Leicester. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) in his new capacity in the Department of Health and we all look forward to working with him. In addition to the NSPCC there are other bodies doing sterling work in this area—for example, the Church of England Children's Society and Barnardo's, to mention but two.

Training for parenthood can take place in schools, but it should not be confined to girls; boys become parents too. It can be carried out in youth clubs. Pregnant mothers are taught basic baby care, but it is important that both parents are encouraged to learn how to look after children as they develop. The child protection teams provide family care and help in learning parenting skills and to meet children's needs. That can be done in family centres, in the home or simply by the use of literature. I draw the

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attention of the House to the admirable guide issued by the NSPCC called "Putting Children First". It is easily available to all parents, and it is a useful document.

It is important that we put the court cases to which attention has naturally been drawn into perspective with the problem as a whole. In the year ending September 1987, the NSPCC had referred to it 23,000 cases involving 45,000 children. Of these, only 120 led to court proceedings and 446 to court actions. This year's figures, which are to be published shortly, are likely to show a small reduction in the overall figures, but a similar proportion. Of those cases some 58 per cent. are referred to the society by members of the general public.

It is interesting to note that 18 per cent. of the cases are referred by parents themselves. They may have come to the end of their tether. All of us who have been parents can understand how near one can get to that point. Parents turn to the society and seek and receive help. All parents should know that that service is available from their local child protection team 24 hours a day.

We think of child abuse in terms of physical or sexual abuse, but of the most recent year's figures, 21 per cent. involved physical abuse, 15 per cent. sexual abuse and 23 per cent. neglect. Children were underfed or badly clothed. Some 16 per cent. were cases of children simply being left alone; one might describe that as negative abuse. To deprive a child of love, care and proper clothing and nourishment is as much an abuse as striking that child.

If time allowed, I could cite several cases to show that, including some where the poverty is not material but emotional with potentially tragic consequences. It is important that all such cases are spotted at an early stage. There is a real need for professionals, social workers, teachers, parents and health visitors to be able to detect early signs of child abuse. The NSPCC offers a national training scheme for such professionals. Its value is recognised by the financial assistance which the Government provide for that training. The Minister is today at the new training centre in Leicester.

Despite these measures, incidents of child abuse occur and they must be dealt with by the courts. As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth said, the Criminal Justice Act 1988 strengthens the courts' powers in several ways which I need not repeat. I warmly endorse his plea that the Pigot committee should proceed as rapidly as possible with its task so that we can see whether we can take the extremely valuable step forward of being able to use, not simply a video link, but video recordings in court cases. The issue has been fully debated in the past and I hope that it will not be long before we can take this valuable step. It is useful as the child does not have to appear in court. There are other valuable spin-offs, in that it assists police and social workers in pursuing their aspects of the case if they have not simply a written but a video record of what the child says took place.

I, too, warmly welcome the Children Bill which is being debated in another place. It seeks to strike the balance between the rights of children and the rights of parents which is so important, as was made clear recently in Cleveland. It also seeks to describe where and how the state should step in and take over as a parent. I have sat as the chairman of a juvenile court and made care orders, deciding in the name of the state to take children away from their mother and put them into care, so I know what a serious but sometimes necessary step that is.

Later in the Session, we shall have an opportunity to examine the Bill in detail, but perhaps I can refer to one omission which is relevant to today's debate. At present, if an officer of the social services or the NSPCC has suspicions or information about a particular child, calls at the house and either receives no reply or hears that the child is asleep or "away with aunty", there is little that he or she can do. If that happens several times, the social worker is in a dilemma, either to let the matter rest or to return armed with a warrant and a place of safety order and literally take the child away.

The House may recall that in April my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West, (Mrs. Bottomley), who would certainly have taken part in this debate had she not been elevated to ministerial rank, introduced, under the 10-minute rule procedure, the Medical Examination of Children at Risk Bill. It gave the power to social workers in such cases to serve an order on the parents, requiring them to produce that child for medical examination within three days. That would not deprive the parents of the child, but it would put the onus on the parents to produce the child. It would be a valuable weapon in the fight against child abuse, and I hope that we can add it to the Bill when it comes before this House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth and I approached this subject perhaps from slightly different angles, but we share the same views, and I thank him again for this opportunity to discuss it.

5.49 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) on tabling this motion. As he rightly said, this matter has the support of all parts of the House. We are all deeply concerned about the protection of the child. I add to the points that the hon. Gentleman made our appreciation of all the agencies that carry out this work. I do not want to list them, because I may leave one out. I believe that all hon. Members recognise their good work, and this is an opportunity to voice our appreciation.

Although we are entirely in agreement on this matter, I feel that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth was perhaps over-optimistic about what had been done in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. Of course many measures contained in that Act were good and valuable, and will help in sentencing and in stamping out abuse, but I see those only as a step forward in getting to grips with child abuse. I believe that there are many avenues to be pursued—especially our policy on non-custodial sentencing. It would be wrong and certainly over-simplistic if the House believed that we could slap people in prison and that would be the end of it. After the Cleveland affair, we have enough information to realise that the issue is complex and that there is no simplistic approach to sentencing policy. We must look at each case on its merits, because what might be suitable for one case might not be for others.

The great benefit of the efforts of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth to have this debate is that we can place before the country some of the strategic issues in preventing child abuse and neglect. My hon. Friend the

Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) mentioned the teenage chat lines, about which I have great concerns. It worries me that telephone companies can, at phenomenal tariff rates, encourage people to have telephone conversations which are titillating and stimulating in certain ways. Those services are there purely for the purpose of making profit and nothing else. The profit margins are massive, and the consequences of encouraging that kind of service worries me.

I believe that a number of measures in the Criminal Justice Act were positive and the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth was right to point them out. The use of live video for children, not when giving preliminary evidence but during trials, must be especially applauded. To be confronted by all the paraphernalia in a court—for instance, people dressed in wigs and gowns and especially to be confronted by the accused—could be traumatic for many children. I welcome the pilot trial that is commencing on a greater scale in the 10 Crown courts and we look forward to the results with interest.

I welcome, too, the sentences of from two to 10 years for the abuse of children under the age of 16 which came into operation in September.

The right of the Attorney-General to send alleged lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal—which is contained in section 36 of the new Act—is also to be welcomed. The recent case presided over by Judge Harold Cassells was an example of a judge failing in his judgment. In fact, there was uproar throughout the country about what he said in court. Frankly, it showed that judges are not perfect people, by any stretch of the imagination. That net to ensure that leniency will not have a deleterious effect is something that the Opposition welcome.

I do not fully understand the ideas of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth about the leniency of the rules of corroboration. I am not sure that that will be as powerful as he suggested. Will the Minister comment on this matter, because I understand that he piloted the Bill through the House? Although I understand that there has been a change, and that a child's sworn evidence has the same status as that of an adult, I am not sure that, in sex cases especially, there is much of a change from the present situation.

We have measures now that will help the child involved in court processes. Some of the measures in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 provide a wider range of sentences which the court may apply in very serious cases. However, I believe that we need to go further. The NSPCC has made some suggestions, and I shall put a few of them briefly to the House. It commented on the use of video recordings in child sex abuse cases. Those are the video recordings which would be associated with preliminary statements. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) has spoken out powerfully and often on such recordings. I have listened carefully, and I believe that we will all benefit from the study that Judge Pigot is presently carrying out. Although videos have now been accepted in principle, I believe that the extension needs to be based on sound advice and evidence, which I hope Judge Pigot's review will provide.

The notion of improving training for the magistracy, for lay benches and for the judiciary will help children. The NSPCC feels that many people in such positions do not understand the full effect of the court process on children and that it finds, for example, tax evasion cases, and, perhaps, criminal cases more interesting than child abuse cases. It has been said that their priorities are not as great as they could be.

The work of the NSPCC suggests that, when a sentence has been passed, that can be helpful to a child, because, if a person is behind bars, that child is safe from further abuse. Members of a family may dispute what a child has said, and that child may feel isolated. Of course, if somebody is convicted of that sort of crime, it means that the other members of the family could support the child, because they know that the person who was abusing the child has been convicted. That is a beneficial effect of such convictions.

If someone is convicted, a child can also be reassured that he or she is not the guilty party. Although children may be abused, they often love their parents and feel guilty about disclosing their parents' activities. Children can consider such disclosures disloyal and they can cause them great difficulties. It is ironic that the break-up of a family can, in many respects, be more traumatic than the abuse encountered by a child. Of course, that varies from case to case, as it is a complex issue, but often there is pressure on a child to do what he or she can to keep a family from breaking up.

The NSPCC believes—a belief shared by many people—that custodial sentences may not act as a deterrent. This is an emotional issue, and we must consider it carefully. When an abuser within a family is discovered, the reaction is often, "Lock that person up. Never let them see the light of day again." My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles, in her excellent speech, pointed out, however, that some people become addicted to the sexual abuse of children. If someone is put behind bars and then allowed out at some time in the future, that does not necessarily solve the problem. Often, all they do is come out of prison to abuse again.

When custodial or non-custodial sentences are imposed, it is extremely important that people receive the right kind of therapy and treatment to break the cycle of abuse that can occur within families. Without such therapy, the chances of recidivism are exceedingly high. I congratulate the Government on introducing measures that we are delighted to support, but we must ensure that the pulic do not believe that the Act is all about locking people up. That would be misleading. We must ensure that we deal with this matter properly.

I should like to refer the House to the views of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss—the House will be aware that she headed the inquiry at Cleveland—which were expressed in *The Independent* on 24 September. Unfortunately, the article carried the alarming title:

"Sex abuse fathers could stay at home, judge says".

I have a lot of time for *The Independent*, and it is a great pity that it should treat this matter in such an alarmist manner. In the article, Lord Justice Butler-Sloss called for "radical new approaches to sentencing child sex abusers to prevent children becoming double victims."

She said:

"Alternatives to prison had to be explored to spare children's agonies of guilt. In Cleveland, many children felt that by disclosing abuse they were responsible for splitting up their own families . . . Even in cases of incest, where a father admitted the offence and was genuinely repentant, probation or therapy might be considered as an alternative to prison.

Where a father was genuinely sorry for what he had done, the option of probation or therapy might prompt him to admit the offence and spare the child the further agony of a court appearance. In some cases, if the protection of the child

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could be ensured, the father might even be able to stay with the family . . . 'I do not mean that violent offenders should be let off.'"

It is important to stress that we are not talking about violent offenders. Lord Justice Butler-Sloss said:

"'we ought at least to look at the different approaches which might be more beneficial for the child and family.'"

It is very interesting to note that the article also reported that the chief constable of West Yorkshire, Colin Sampson, recently said at a conference that there had to be "'very special circumstances' before the police would feel happy that a child abuser might return home. 'There is always the worry that the offence might be repeated.'"

However, he went on to say that the police were not a hard-line organisation and added:

"'alternatives to prison have always to be considered. Each case has to be looked at on its merits. If the merits of the case indicate there is better treatment than prison, I would be all for it.'"

It is worth putting that long quote on the record because it demonstrates that there are people who believe that we must carefully consider each case to ensure that the sentence imposed is correct.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The hon. Gentleman referred to Cleveland. How would he and my hon. Friend the Minister react to the letter that I received this morning from the Rev. Michael Wright, who has helped all the families whose children have been taken away from them? He told me that two girls and a boy had been taken from a family, in which the boy was the baby of the family. There was no question of sexual abuse, and the two girls have been returned to their family. The parents want their son back, but he is so confused about who his parents are that there is now a court application being made for the child to be adopted by his foster parents. The natural parents are desperately upset.

Mr. Randall: That is very interesting. Although it does not fit in with the logic of my argument, I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made his point. The incident he has described is a terrific tragedy, and it shows that we must carefully consider how we deal with abuse and suspected abuse cases.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles that it is staggering that we have not had an opportunity to debate the Butler-Sloss report. I know that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), together with my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), has played a significant part in the Cleveland case; I congratulate them both on their efforts. The example that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh quoted illustrates the difficulties and tragedies that can ensue from such cases.

I am aware that other hon. Members wish to participate, so I shall be brief. In common with the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), however, I should like to quote one or two statistics about the scale of the problem. I refer to the article that appeared in *The Guardian* on 16 June 1988 under the headline:

"Legal changes sought to end evil in the home".

The article is based on the NSPCC report, which called on the Government to legislate so that the child abuser, not the victim, could be removed from the family home, without necessarily going to prison.

We need to debate that idea. In child abuse cases, the child is often taken into care while the abuser remains at home. I am not sure that that is necessarily the right way to do things. Of course, cases vary and we cannot be too dogmatic, but I am sympathetic to the NSPCC director's comments.

In the report, the NSPCC spoke of many cases not coming to court because the evidence was inadmissible and because it was too traumatic for the child to give evidence in person. But some of the statistics are frightening:

"The NSPCC analysis offers a revealing profile of the typical child abuse case.

Fewer than 40 per cent. of victims were actually living with both natural parents when abused. About a quarter lived with their natural mother and a stepfather or boy friend. Another quarter lived only with their mother.

Stepfathers and boy friends were implicated in 19 per cent. of injury cases and a quarter of sex abuse cases. Natural fathers were implicated in a third of sex abuse cases, compared with 3 per cent. of mothers."

So natural fathers were involved to a greater extent than boy friends or stepfathers.

The average age of registered victims of all forms of abuse was six years and 10 months, which is horrific. The average age of sexually abused children was nine years and eight months. The article went on to say that marital problems were the most common cause of abuse, followed by unemployment.

A number of measures, including some in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, have been introduced, many of which we support, but we feel that we must go further than introducing custodial sentences and bring in therapeutic work under a statutory obligation. These services are patchy throughout the country. It is important that the Government should compel prison authorities and others to provide such services.

For the future, we need a range of sentences and services to ensure that those who are sentenced return to life in a more normal and natural way. These measures are desperately important, and the list of what we should like to do is almost endless. Today, both sides of the House have supported the motion introduced by the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth, whose initiative we welcome.

6.13 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) on his initiative in bringing forward this important subject for debate. I want to refer briefly to what the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said. I greatly respect her experience. My own long experience in dealing with children as schoolmaster and teacher and in clubs and so on tells me that what often matters most in a person, be he amateur or professional, is motivation.

For many years in this country children's orphanages were run by gifted amateurs from religious orders. The nuns and monks were highly motivated to do the job, but they were removed after the war from this vocation and professionals were put in to do the job. As a result there is often less love around for the children: the motivation is not the same. I think that children have suffered as a result.

I believe that sound marriage gives children the best hope of not being molested or abused. It is incredible that any adult can lay into a child in the way that some of them do. I came across a case only last week in which a man of 6 ft 4 in had smashed into a four-year-old child with all his

considerable force. That is both unbelievable and heartbreaking. Clearly adults who behave like that suffer from some sort of inadequacy.

The national honorary secretary of Family and Youth Concern wrote to me this morning as follows:

"I understand that the government is mounting a campaign for more child care facilities to enable more women to join the labour force. In Sweden where the state assumes responsibility for the care of children from an early age there are serious problems. One study showed that half the nation's seven-year olds suffer from harmful stress. Teenage rioting is a recurring problem. 25,000 children are in state custody (12,000 having been forceably removed from their parents) compared with a sum total of 1,500 in other Nordic countries. Over 125 children commit suicide each year. Among explanations for these problems, the one most cited is the decline of parental supervision in a country where most parents work full-time."

The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts visited Washington earlier this year to observe the education of the under-fives. It was amazing to discover that 57 per cent. of parents with children who were one year old or younger both worked full time, and that their children went into creche or other facilities from the age of two weeks. Of course, I understand that there is often a social or financial need for both parents to work, but when they do it is imperative that society provide alternative facilities and care for children which will provide them with substitute parental love. If that does not happen, we build up much trouble for ourselves.

There is a great need to strengthen the family. Children in families are rarely battered, although, as hon. Members said, they can be abused. That is a matter for great concern. The marriage commitment strengthens the parental bond between men and women to whom children are born, and the children benefit greatly from that——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No. I am anxious to be brief.

The taxation of man and wife on the same basis as that for unmarried people living together is welcome and should go further.

I also welcome the Children Bill, which is being debated in another place. However, I am worried about an amendment to it which will be debated this week and which would ban the odd parental smack of a child. It is quite absurd to try to legislate on parents' physical control of their children, which is occasionally necessary. My three children are now 18, 17 and 13 and my wife told me yesterday that she has issued three smacks in their lives. I do not know who got what, but it happened because she was exasperated—and on each occasion it cleared the air. She felt better, the children felt better, and everything was all right—*[Interruption.]* I have never battered my wife.

To move to the position in Sweden, where children are told from the age of five that they should report it to the police if they are smacked by their parents, would be an unwarranted intrusion into family life and would help no one. It would divide children from their parents, which is the worst thing that one could do. The loving bond between parent and child should not be violated. If a parent loves his child, he will not wish to batter him, and if the child loves his parent, he will do what the parent wants him to do in his own interests. Any law that encourages the reporting of chastisement of a child would be highly divisive and must be resisted at all costs. I hope that this week the House of Lords will throw out the suggestion for all time.

School security is essential. When I was running a school with 2,200 pupils, I was always there at 8 am, especially on cold mornings, to ensure that the school was open so that children who wanted to come in had a warm atmosphere in which they could be comfortable, sit down and read or even take part in some recreation with their friends in the games room. That gave children a sense of security and was part of the reason why some schools decided to extend their school day. It gave children the extra security that they could not get at home because both their parents were working.

I am extremely anxious about the security of children in some schools. Sadly, on 13 October, in my constituency, an eight-year-old child was molested by an intruder in a school lavatory. That should not happen anywhere. The local authority spends only £15,000 a year on school security throughout the borough. That cash must be spread over many schools, and it is an inadequate sum. In that case, there were four schools for young children on the same site, but the council failed to put high railings round each school so that they could be secure.

Also, head teachers or deputy heads should always be walking the school. I always did that as a teacher, no matter how junior I was. When I was a head teacher, I did it because I always found children who should be at their lessons walking about the school and I could do something about them. By walking the school, a head teacher could find any intruders and deal with them. The fencing of Wood End school in Northolt was promised by Christmas, but it has not happened. I hope that the local authority will get its act together and fence the school properly early in the new year. It is essential to protect those little children from child molesters.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth said, the welfare of the child is paramount. Molesters must be kept off council estates. I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) that child molesters can rarely be cured. Sadly, recividism among child molesters is very high. Two or three years ago in my constituency, a child molester who had been in Broadmoor for several years was released and, because there was inadequate liaison among the police, the prison authorities and the local authorities, he was allocated accommodation on a council estate next door to a flat in which some small children lived. It was no time before he was giving them sweets, and then £1 or £5 to lie on his bed. To the consternation of us all, he molested two children there. That should not have occurred. I hope that in future there will be more co-operation among the police, local authorities, schools and all concerned with children. Only if everyone pulls together shall we obtain the proper protection that children so urgently require.

6.24 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I am broadly in favour of the motion introduced by the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), but it does not distinguish between sexual abuse and other types of deliberate physical maltreatment. Although the former occurs across the social spectrum, the latter is prevalent in deprived families. Neither type of abuse can be justified,

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

but the number of battered children would probably be reduced more by the reversal of some social security cuts than by the introduction of extreme punishments.

For every type of child abuse, the justifiable outrage of decent citizens tends to result in a clamour for tougher sentences. We are all worried by the fact that some judgments are only a slap on the wrist, rather than an expression of moral outrage. The judiciary cannot be seen to condone child abuse. Unfortunately, the vast majority of judges are white, male and middle-aged or elderly. Sometimes they seem to be more worried about the protection of property than about assaults on the person —even those committed against innocent children and, especially, babies.

The Social and Liberal Democrats believe that the extension of family courts would help in that direction. We support the section of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 that deals with evidence given by children. But we should not fall into the naive belief that legal arrangements will cure the cancer. Like sadistic murders, the abuse of children is sometimes committed by mentally sick people, and legal sanctions would not restrain them. Tougher punishments may be satisfying for some, but they delude us into thinking that the problem is being tackled when it is not.

Much of the terrifying amount of child abuse that now occurs, and perhaps has been occurring for many years, is committed by so-called ordinary people. The number of crimes may be reduced by more education of parents about child development. In some circumstances, children with disabilities are especially at risk. If their parents were taught to accept their difficulties, there might be less tension in some households. Moreover, the social services should pay greater attention when a stressful family is faced with a sudden crisis that could act as a trigger to child abuse. I have spoken to many directors of social services. The director in Southport, who also represents Sefton authority, has said many times that his budget is too restricted to allow him to deal with all the matters that he would wish.

I had the honour of meeting and talking to a constituent, Mr. Charles Oxley—the gentleman is now deceased—who was the main opponent of paedophile organisations. Although such organisations have been made illegal in Britain, diaries are still sold here which advertise international paedophile organisations. Some abusers in Britain use the fact that those diaries are on sale as an excuse for their activities, saying that it cannot be wrong as long as such material is available. I believe that it is wrong and that the diaries should be banned. I hope that the Minister will examine the matter.

I should like to praise the Government for at last conducting a national survey into child abuse. At last, the scale of the problem should become clearer. However, I am disappointed that that research appears only to cover England. Is there no child abuse in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland?

I also welcome the publication of guidelines for social workers which might help them in what can undoubtedly be very difficult situations. However, unfortunately, human judgment is still crucial and mistakes are therefore possible. The risk could be reduced if the social services were not so badly funded and understaffed.

Clearly, the Government must act to protect children. I believe that they will do so through the Children Bill, which will certainly have my support and that of my party.

6.30 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I wish to speak in this debate for two simple reasons, first, to stress how little we know about child abuse and, secondly, to plead with the House to take one specific aspect of child abuse a great deal more seriously that it has been taken in the past.

Abusing children is so self-evidently abhorrent and wishing to protect children is so self-evidently good that there is a real danger of jumping to conclusions without too much thought. However, if we are to make any real progress in this matter, we must first take one step back from those instinctive and emotional reactions and take a long, hard look at the facts.

However, if we set out to look at the facts, we quickly make a rather nasty discovery—that very few facts are available. Many of the key issues have yet to be researched. One of the infrequently quoted parts of the Cleveland inquiry report states on page 245:

"There are some issues of importance upon which we did not receive evidence and which we have not addressed. These include specifically the nature of abusers and the reasons for sexual abuse of children; the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategies used once the problem has been identified; and the response of society and the agencies to those who abuse."

That is a pretty fundamental list of issues and, until it is addressed, we shall continue to know next to nothing about who the abusers are and why they do it, or about the worth of the way in which we are currently responding.

Clearly, the Government have an important role to play in such research. They need to concentrate on more than the abusers and the abuse. They also need to focus on the abused children, the effects of that abuse on the children, how such children can be helped and how families can be steered away from abuse.

The Government can also help in other ways, first, by standardising the definitions of abuse, which are many and varied, and, secondly, by compulsorily requiring reports to be sent to the Department of Health on all matters concerning abuse. Only then will reliable statistics be available and, until then, we can only guess how much abuse is taking place.

We must do a great deal of research, but we must also abandon some familiar preconceptions. For example, we must give up the idea that child abuse is carried out by dirty old men in raincoats on street corners. The Cleveland inquiry report states on page 243:

"We have learned during the Inquiry that sexual abuse occurs in children of all ages, including the very young, to boys as well as girls, in all classes of society and frequently within the privacy of the family."

By way of example, we must give up the idea that child physical abuse is caused simply by poverty and/or unemployment. I quote from a survey by Vallender and Fogelman, published this year, about existing knowledge on the subject. It states:

"One misconception is that we are all potential batterers and that the main causes are depression and poverty. In fact, most parents who violently assault their children are young, immature, ill-educated, disorganised and aggressive; many of the fathers involved have criminal records. Their incomes are similar to those of non-battering families, but they organise their finances badly."

Besides doing more research, we must abandon those preconceived notions and be clear in our minds about the

ultimate objective of our efforts. It is not simply the protection of children; it is not even the conviction and punishment of offenders. It is the prevention of abuse and, in that context, it is easy to forget that protection and prevention are not necessarily the same thing.

What can we do to prevent child abuse? First, society must take early action rather than wait and then indulge in crisis intervention. Secondly, we must promote children's welfare within the family unit rather than simply stepping in and removing children from their parents. Thirdly, when the removal of a child has become inevitable, we must make certain that there has been adequate parental change before that child is returned to the family.

How does the Children Bill fit in with this analysis? It will improve the framework and help professionals operate in a much clearer environment, but legislation alone is not enough. Society also has a part to play. We should ask ourselves three basic questions about our current values and standards. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) asked, should we be worried about recent trends in family life? Secondly, does the law's view of children as possessions and chattels, rather than as whole people, make abuse more likely? Thirdly, does the daily diet of sex and violence in the media, particularly on television, make child abuse seem more normal?

I have concentrated so far on child abuse in the family, where most abuse takes place, but I want to say a few words about child abuse outside the family, particularly about the abuse in the name of religion. I do so because many people are all too ready to laugh this off as unimportant, but it is not; it happens. It is evil and those who are involved must be tracked down and dealt with. Those who systematically and deliberately abuse children for their own depraved ends must expect no sympathy from this House, the nation or from people anywhere.

Let me give two examples of what I have in mind. First, there is a cult known as the Children of God. Its members are followers of a defrocked Christian minister, David Berg, and they give everything in the Bible a sexual meaning. Thus,

"I will make you fishers of men"

becomes a call for teenage girls and young women to become prostitutes to recruit new members. In taped sermons in my possession, Berg preaches that there is a new commandment, "Thou shalt have sex", starting as a young child. We do not need to go further than a shopping mall in my constituency to meet members of that organisation.

My second example is satanism. All too often, its mention produces giggles and images of witches on broomsticks, but satanism is not the same thing as witchcraft. It is about the ritual mutilation and torture of people, particularly children, human and animal sacrifice and cannibalism. I shall quote from an article in *Style* magazine, published in January of this year, which states:

"Sam Hoyer's nightmare began at birth. Sam spent the first 16 years of her life in an . . . orphanage in New England . . . When Sam was 9 years old, cult leaders designated her and a handful of other children as candidates for the role of high priestess . . . Testing the children's powers, the religious impostors strapped six of the 'candidates' to crosses and burned them. Sam alone survived . . . As part of her grooming, Sam was required to watch other children being sacrificed; then she was forced to witness and participate in cannibalism."

In case any of my colleagues are tempted to dismiss that report as the exaggerated ramblings of American journalists, I must tell hon. Members that I have a list of 30 recent satanic murderers who have been brought before United States courts. If any of my colleagues are tempted to believe that those things do not happen here, I must tell them that only 10 days ago one of my local newspapers, the *Egham and Staines News*, carried a headline stating:

"Baby in satanic killing. Throat cut by coven members."

I hope that I have said enough to prove that cults do not consist of eccentric people who wear black robes and funny pointed hats. All too often they involve the deliberate abuse of children and young people. We cannot afford to laugh cults off. The time has now come to take them much more seriously than we have in the past. We must warn the public about them and the real dangers that they represent. We must act against the organisers of such depravity and cruelty.

6.40 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): We have had an excellent debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) and all hon. Members have joined in congratulating him on presenting the motion and on the way in which he conducted himself while doing so. I was delighted that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) spoke from the Labour Front Bench and that he was able to join in the congratulations offered to my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth was right to refer to the need for deterrence and the importance of deterring, punishing and, sometimes inevitably, alas, simply keeping people off the streets and away from possible temptation. My hon. Friend, like others today, mentioned the importance of prevention. A policy of deterrence and punishment must go hand in hand with a policy of prevention. There is all-party agreement on that approach and much of that approach was marked in my hon. Friend's most interesting speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth did almost as good a job as the excellent civil servants who advise Home Office Ministers in giving us a list of the new penalties that have been introduced for child abuse in the past four years. His list was almost complete and makes it almost otiose for me to take the House through each of the new penalties to which my hon. Friend referred. He was right to say that the penalties are becoming more severe. Everyone in this country, while wishing to reform and repair the damage among those who have committed crime, wants to see child abusers almost more than anyone else—perhaps other than those who commit crimes against women—dealt with by the courts with the maximum possible severity.

I believe that my hon. Friend was also right to draw to our attention, and therefore perhaps to the attention of the media and through it to the attention of those who are tempted to commit crimes against children through sexual or physical assault or by neglect, or a combination of all three, the fact that should those people be caught and convicted after due process in the courts and sent to prison, their lives in prison will be difficult, although not because that is the sentence of the courts or because that is what the House wants. We want people to be sent to prison to be punished. Being sent to prison is the punishment and life in prison should be austere but nothing other than that. Nothing that happens in prison is

[Mr. John Patten]

part of the punishment of being sent to prison. The punishment is the deprivation of liberty. That is what prison is all about.

None the less, other prisoners are human beings with emotions. As my hon. Friend said in a chilling part of his speech aimed at those who may be tempted to commit child abuse, people who are sentenced for that will be segregated and cut off from much of prison life. Of course they will be protected by the hard-working prison officers who ensure that order is maintained in prisons. They will be protected from violent and verbal abuse as much as possible in the circumstances. However, prison life being as it is, other prisoners feel very strongly about such crimes. Having to be segregated, as child molesters and child offenders sometimes must be, will be an even more disagreeable experience than simply being in prison. Life in prison for those people will become even more of a punishment, and some would say rightly I dare say, than for most people who are imprisoned.

In his list of the punishments available to the courts and other reforms introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1988, my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth came up with an idea that was totally new to me. He raised the concept of advertising. He suggested that we should take further steps to counter the menace of child abuse, and he proposed that televison advertisements aimed at potential child abusers should be shown with the broadcasters' late-night output.

We must not discount any measures which might be effective. However, I am not sure how far we can take my hon. Friend's idea at the moment. Television advertisements can certainly be very powerful in drawing attention to problems and consequences to change people's behaviour. Advertisements for drink and driving, drugs, AIDS and the Government's campaign on crime prevention are examples of that. As almost all hon. Members today have said, child abuse is an exceptionally complex phenomenon. I do not think that we should underestimate that. We would need to take advice from psychiatrists and others before we were certain that we could devise an advertising campaign which would help to overcome perversion.

Who would see the advertisements? It is perhaps too easy to assume that those who watch certain material late at night necessarily include a high proportion of child abusers. We simply do not know. We do not know enough about the profile of the child abuser. I believe that it is at least as likely that abusers will watch other programmes at other times. We have been resolute in trying to restrain unsuitable material being seen in the home. We hope to introduce new measures to the Broadcasting Standards Council about the standards of taste and decency. We also have a very sound system for classifying videos through the Video Recordings Act 1984 which is doing much to stamp out the most undesirable material. Through the Criminal Justice Act 1988, we recently extended the powers of trading standards officers to enforce the law in that respect. We are not letting things slide in the wrong direction.

I am sad that at least one other hon. Member who has taken a notable interest in this issue, the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), did not speak. Perhaps she was observing the old convention that the Whip should not speak, but should be mute in the Chamber. Happily for us, during the Committee stage of the Criminal Justice Bill last summer, the hon. Lady was not remotely mute. From time to time she would nip niftily to the back of the Committee from the Whip's seat and make an impassioned speech, quite often against the Opposition Front Bench. She would then nip back to Whip the troops. That was a tour de force, and I was hoping that we might see something like it this evening.

Mr. Wilshire: What about the Government Whips?

Mr. Patten: Well, a terrible chill went through the Chamber and the nerves tingled down the back of my neck when my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas) entered the Chamber to take up his one-time accustomed place on the Government Benches as a Whip. He is standing in. Perhaps some terrible horror has struck the Whips' Office. Perhaps they have all been laid low. However, when I entered this House in 1979, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth disciplined me and other new Members with a ferocity unparalled in the Whips' Office.

Let me deal in turn with the speeches made by hon. Members. I hope also for an opportunity to debate an issue with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), when he chooses to intervene.

In a balanced speech, the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) pointed out that often those who abuse were themselves abused when young. It is clear from research undertaken by the Home Office and by work that the prison service has done that many sexual abusers were subject to sexual or violent abuse when they were themselves children. Much good therapeutic work is under way in Her Majesty's prison Grendon Underwood, both to reform and cure, but also simply to understand the motivation of so many child abusers. We are a long way from being able to draw up a satisfactory profile of the average child abuser, if there is such a thing. Nevertheless, several hon. Members have made a good attempt at doing so this afternoon, and they all point in the right direction.

A second important point made by the hon. Member for Eccles concerned the worrying report—which was new to me—that perhaps child-lines are open to abuse through the British Telecom and Mercury networks. I was not aware of that, but my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health was on the Front Bench when the hon. Lady made her remarks, and I know that he will give them the characteristic care and attention that he gave to matters of defence procurement for which he was responsible until the end of last week—*[Interruption.]* Luckily, I did not hear what was said by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, and I am sure that *Hansard*, with its characteristic good taste, did not hear it either.

The third important point made by the hon. Member for Eccles concerned access to police records by voluntary organisations that have children in their care from time to time or that help children. She questioned the point of having good records of people who have been child abusers in the past, and who therefore may present a risk to children's future health and welfare, if responsible individuals cannot gain access to such information.

Arrangements are already in place for local authorities, the National Health Service and independent schools to have access to police records. After considerable

negotiations conducted by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, we have reached agreement on three pilot schemes allowing for access to such information by the voluntary sector. There is, first, one national pilot scheme to consider how the matter can be dealt with effectively nationally and, secondly, two local schemes—at least one of which will be in the west midlands.

Those negotiations have been protracted and difficult, not because of lack of good will by either the voluntary sector or the Home Office but because there are so many voluntary groups involved in the care of children, or who may be involved, at any one time. Working out how they can get the best route into police records but within the bounds of propriety has not been an easy task. Those pilot schemes are in detailed planning and we intend bringing them into effect in the summer of 1989.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): In the light of efforts made some time ago in respect of access to police records, can my hon. Friend say whether, before a person is put in charge of a local authority children's home, the question of a police record will invariably be checked?

Mr. Patten: That should always be the case, and we hope to extend that provision to the voluntary sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr Sims) raised several important points. He, like my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), is concerned about the extent of child abuse and wishes to know how far it has gone. The Department of Health, in consultation with the Home Office, is now considering establishing research into the characteristics and circumstances of child abusers. We hope to proceed with that as soon as possible. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst spoke of the NSPCC, with which he has long had a link. We value his work, as we do that of Dr. Alan Gilmour, the society's director, who, alas, will shortly retire. Dr. Gilmour is tireless in pursuing Ministers. He frequently pursued me when I was in the then Department of Health and Social Security, and the other day he winkled me out in the Home Office.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst referred also to putting the child first. He moved on to the difficult territory of those occasions when the police, social workers and others decide between them not only that a criminal charge will not stick but, even if it would, it is not in the child's best interest to bring a prosecution. Such are fantastically difficult decisions for those in the caring agencies and in the police to take. Rather like those life and death decisions that physicians and surgeons in hospitals must sometimes take about when a course of treatment should be terminated, decisions taken privately by the police and social workers are excellent decisions, when they work. However, when they go wrong—as sometimes, alas, they do—they go horribly wrong, publicly and in the glare of publicity. It is not an easy course for anyone to take.

Mr. Tony Banks: I wish to raise the question of the social workers' role in the context of my own constituency. I understand that each year there is a loss of about 900 social workers throughout the United Kingdom. In the context of the problems associated with child abuse, having more professionally trained social workers available must clearly be one of the resource approaches to dealing with a terrible problem. What proposals has the Minister for increasing the number of local authority social workers? My constituency, because it is an outer London borough, has difficulty in attracting sufficient numbers of social workers as it cannot offer inner London weighting.

Mr. Patten: That matter continually exercises the Department of Health, as it will my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, who was in his place on the Government Front Bench earlier. I shall ensure that the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is brought to my hon. Friend's attention.

In an interesting speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) drew attention to what happens when there is family breakdown, and how it alone may be not the cause of abuse—because no single factor is usually the cause—but how an unstable family structure can provide the setting for it. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend in his remarks about the importance of the family and the help that we must always give the family.

My hon. Friend referred also to the problems sometimes facing working mothers. Forty three per cent. of the country's work force are women. We are told by demographers—although they are rather a rum lot, and I am not sure that they can predict the future any more than psephologists can predict the outcome of elections—that, by 1995, about 80 per cent. of all new entrants into the labour market will, to quote from something I recently read, have to be women if the jobs are to be filled. That must mean increasing help for families. It must come from employers first and foremost, and not from the state.

I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, together with others responsible for ensuring equal opportunities, do not wish to see a set-up of state-run creches. We are totally opposed to that. However, we would like to promote and to see in the next few years, in close consultation with employers—because there is no collision necessarily between caring and a career—good local provision by the private sector and voluntary organisations that will give the small-scale framework for child care, and provide—to paraphrase my hon. Friend's words—that surrogate family style and love and support during the hours when a mother is at work. That, I believe, is the right framework for the development of child care rather than larger scale provision.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) raised an important point about paedophiles, drawing to our attention the existence of diaries providing addresses internationally and the possibility of their encouraging paedophiles. If any such diaries have been sent to him by those who have complained, I urge the hon. Gentleman to make them available to the police and the prosecuting authorities. I recently held a talk with justice Ministers in other European countries, and we are determined between us to do all that we can to stamp out this vile abuse.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House expresses its disgust and alarm at the spread of child abuse throughout the United Kingdom; welcomes the provisions contained within the Criminal Justice Act 1988 designed to protect children and to deter potential child abusers; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that the range of sentences available to the courts are regularly reviewed, are sufficient to enable the courts to deal effectively with those who commit offences against children, and strong enough to serve as a deterrent to those who may act towards a child in an unnatural way.

Adjournment (Christmas)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 22nd December do adjourn until Tuesday 10th January.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

7 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Before we divide on the motion—and I remind my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that, with the late Sir Peter Mills, I once divided the House to urge its Members to stay longer at work——

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I assure my hon. Friend that Sir Peter Mills is not dead.

Sir Peter Emery: He is still very much with us, I am glad to say. He is a past Member of Parliament. I did not refer to him by his constituency because he no longer has a constituency, but he and I divided the House on this motion some time ago.

I want to discuss four matters relating to eggs. First, however, I wish to put to my right hon. Friend a point concerning procedure. Today we have a good deal of private Members' time. We have this debate, allowing hon. Members to raise particular matters, and afterwards we have the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. Traditionally, in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate Back Benchers may raise any constituency matter that they wish to be brought to the attention of Ministers. There are two, three or sometimes four such debates each year, giving Back Benchers a specific opportunity to raise such matters.

Because of the way in which the Government have arranged today's business, the Consolidated Fund Bill debate may not be reached until 10 pm. Four hours today, but on an ordinary day it would have been six hours, of time in which Back Benchers might normally expect to be able to make constituency points have been taken away. The Government may reply that there are precedents; indeed, since 1982 I am afraid that it has been the exception rather than the rule for the Consolidated Fund Bill debate to start in prime time, at 3.30 or 4.30 pm, after Question Time or statements. The Government are depriving Back Benchers of rare and much-wanted time for debate. Many Back Benchers do not wish the debate to start at 10 pm.

It is true that we have allowed for a limitation on the debate so that instead of running to any hour it must finish at 9 am, but I think that the Government should consider beginning it at the start of business and letting it run its course. Back-Bench time is slim enough as it is, and it should not be eaten away, even for the convenience of the Front Bench. Perhaps the Front Bench is considering the majority of hon. Members: if the debate had begun at the start of today's business perhaps we would not have been able to adjourn for the Christmas recess until Friday, rather than Thursday. Regardless of what is convenient for the majority, however, the Leader of the House has a responsibility to the minority, who have the right to make constituency points at prime time and with full time for the Consolidated Fund Bill. I hope that my right hon. Friend and the two Front Benches will consider that in due course.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. May I add that today we have had three and a half hours of private Members' motions, and an hour and a half has been taken up with ministerial statements?

Sir Peter Emery: That reinforces my point.

As the House will know, I have been massively concerned with the egg problem ever since it began. I very much welcomed the statement today by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He made his statement on behalf of the Government as both Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Food, and did so extremely well. Nevertheless, a number of questions could not be put to him. Because of limited time, I was not called. I hope, therefore, that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will consider my comments, or ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to do so.

First, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House do what he can to hasten the consideration of the Select Committee? The Government have decided that they do not wish to hold an inquiry, and I am pleased that they are placing the responsibility with a Select Committee, which I consider is an appropriate way of conducting an inquiry. Haste is needed, however. Whether we like it or not, there is still considerable concern.

My right hon. Friend the Minister said today that there was a very slight chance of contracting salmonella from eggs, and that the level of salmonella in breeding and laying flocks was very low. Against that we have the reports by *The Guardian* and the BBC, quoting statements by Professor Lacey which seem to represent only his personal view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) the ex-Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, has not withdrawn the statement that she made on television. Those who saw her on television know that her remarks were made off the cuff, and they certainly did not fit in with the statement by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture this afternoon that he and the Health Ministers agreed all statements on salmonella and eggs. There was certainly no agreement on the statement made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South. That she has not withdrawn that statement when she is palpably incorrect is a tragedy—a tragedy that has created a problem on which we are having to spend a vast amount of taxpayers' money.

One of my hon. Friends asked whether a precedent was being set. I do not believe that it is. I hope very much that what caused the tragedy was the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South, and we do not expect Ministers' statements to cause such problems in future. There is, of course, every reason for the Government to take the financial action that they are having to take.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): My hon. Friend is, I am sure, aware that Professor Lacey has a long record of attacking the battery hen industry and is simply using the current problem to promote his own ideas. Does my hon. Friend agree that the advertising, which, in my constituency, has annoyed egg producers as much as the problem itself, needs urgently to be rethought? If we are to encourage people to eat eggs it is essential to produce a short, sharp, simple message, not a full-page advertisement that is very verbose and boring. Does my hon. Friend agree that a simple phrase is needed that will both encourage people to eat eggs and play on the British public's sympathy for animal welfare? Would not the slogan "Save a hen—eat an egg" be much more useful than long advertisements?

Sir Peter Emery: I am not one for sloganising on the Floor of the House. However, I accept what my hon. Friend has said. The advertising campaign has not had the terse, direct impact that most advertising campaigns set out to achieve. I was a Minister during the coal crisis. We hit on a simple slogan. It was SOS, or "Switch Off Something". By jove, that made people save electricity.

May I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House also to consider the problems that the secondary and tertiary industries involved in egg production are now facing. Their problems were not mentioned in the Government statement. A number of major companies in Devon and Dorset are supplying day-old chicks—in some cases 3 million a year. Nothing is to be done for them, but the whole of their business has been put at risk. Bankruptcy faces them, just as it faces the egg producer. Similarly, those who supply feed to egg producers have suffered considerable cuts in their business. It is wrong that they should be left out in the cold. I ask my right hon. Friend to refer this matter to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Will my right hon. Friend also consider what is to happen after the four-week period? The statement applies to four weeks only. I hope that the problem will be solved in four weeks. Every hon. Member will be delighted if it is, but it is unlikely that it will be. The Government must consider, therefore, what they intend to do if the situation is still critical after that period.

What is even more important than all the matters that I have so far raised is the long-term future of egg production. The Minister said that salmonella in breeding and laying flocks is very low. However, some flocks have undoubtedly been affected by salmonella for some time. The Minister should therefore consider what should be done about the affected flocks. Would it not be much better to cull entirely the affected flocks rather than to reduce production by 10 per cent. overall, which would mean that flocks that are not infected with salmonella are also culled? It would be much better to attack directly the main problem. It may not be possible to do so at short notice, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will approach the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and ask him to take positive action.

Only when the public are sure that both the long-term and the short-term problems have been solved will their confidence in eggs be restored. Only then will the cheapest and best form of consuming protein—the consumption of hens' eggs—be acceptable to the country at large. That is what everybody wants and we ought to be working towards that end. We shall achieve it only if we deal with the long-term as well as the short-term problems.

I hope that other hon. Members will support my views and that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be able to reassure us. If he can do so, I shall not need to divide the House.

7.14 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): There is, of course, scant prospect of debating time for any of the issues that will be raised with the Leader of the House this evening, but there are two issues about which there should most certainly be oral ministerial statements before the House rises on Thursday.

I refer, first, to the Department of Social Security's proposal to scrap board and lodging payments for people who live in hostels run by voluntary organisations. It is a proposal that would have a catastrophic effect on thousands of disabled people and, among others, women and children who have fled from violence and now live in hostels run by voluntary organisations such as MENCAP, MIND and Women's Aid.

The Government's proposal, which has angered Members of Parliament of all parties, including the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) who has such a distinguished record of service in this field, is to substitute income support and housing benefit for the board and lodging payments now made to the residents of these hostels. If the proposal goes through, many residents will lose nearly £30 a week, and no one between 16 and 60 will have enough money to pay the current hostel charge of £70 a week. In consequence, 1,750 of the hostels will close at a stroke and most of the people who live in them will have nowhere to go. Many will have to join the growing ranks of the pavement poor whose living conditions on the streets of some of our major cities, as I know well as a trustee of Crisis at Christmas, are a total disgrace to this country.

In addition to the human devastation that the closures will cause, the Government's so-called "community care" programme for people with special needs, which is already in tatters, will be further exposed as a cruel sham.

The proposal is bitterly condemned by more than a score of Britain's most widely-respected and best-known voluntary organisations. It is self-defeating as well as inhumane, since ultimately many of its victims will find themselves in hospitals and other institutions at far higher cost to the taxpayer than that of the board and lodging payments they now receive.

I call most urgently on the Secretary of State for Social Security to relieve the anxieties of thousands of the most needful people in Britain today by withdrawing this odious proposal forthwith and I hope that, if the Leader of the House cannot offer us any assurance about it tonight, there will be a ministerial statement before the House rises for the recess.

The second issue on which I seek a ministerial statement before Thursday concerns the problems and needs of disabled people more generally. This Government came to power with a promise to "single out" disabled people for special help, but even people with the most severe disabilities now complain that instead they have been singled out for special hardship. More than half of all recipients of the severe disablement allowance, for which a claimant has to be over 80 per cent. disabled, have been forced on to means-tested benefits and are living on the breadline.

According to the Disability Alliance which represents over 100 voluntary organisations of and for disabled people, there were more than 1 million disabled losers from the social security cuts inflicted on 11 April. Yet £1·9 million went in tax cuts to the richest 1 per cent. of taxpayers in this year's Budget alone.

The Government now have the results of two major new surveys of Britain's disabled population from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The first, published in September, shows that there are now 6·2 million disabled adults in great Britain, which is double the figure given in the OPCS's previous survey on the prevalence of disability in 1971.

The second new survey, on the financial circumstances of Britain's disabled population, published in November,

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shows that most of them live in preventable poverty. More than 4 million disabled people find it hard to make ends meet. Now that the Government know the number and needs of disabled people, there is no excuse for ministerial inaction and, as a first step, they must urgently reverse the cuts inflicted on 11 April.

The right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), then Minister responsible for disabled people and now Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said in March 1987 that the OPCS's findings, when they were published, would

". . . provide the evidence for a comprehensive review of benefits for long-term sick and disabled people."

Honouring that pledge will involve higher spending and the right hon. Gentleman is now in the best possible Cabinet seat to tell the Prime Minister that the Government cannot help double the number of people on which current policies are based without spending more money.

The OPCS's previous survey in 1971, commissioned by a Labour Government, led to the introduction of the attendance allowance, the mobility allowance, the invalid care allowance and the non-contributory invalidity pension; to the indexing of benefits to the higher of the annual increases in prices and earnings; and to the earnings-related supplement to invalidity pensions. There were unprecedented increases in cash benefits and services for disabled people and that is our credential for demanding action now on the OPCS's reports.

Again, the Government have received from the Social Security Advisory Committee the important recent report entitled "Benefits for Disabled People: A Strategy for Change" which also deserves an urgent and positive ministerial response. Every opinion survey shows that the public want more help to be given. The resources are available. Only distorted priorities stand in the way of helping the poorest disabled people to live fuller and more fulfilling lives.

Local authorities face an even more critical challenge than the Government arising from the OPCS's reports. As of now, they have identified only 1·25 million of the disabled people who are entitled to services under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act which provides for home helps, home adaptations, telephones for the housebound and a wide range of other help. The vast majority of the 6·2 million people now shown by the OPCS to be disabled are entitled to help under the Act, but they will not get it unless the Government make more money available to councils. Council leaders of all political persuasions tell me and the Government that they now have to choose not only which of their discretionary powers to use under the Act, but even which of their legal duties to fulfil. They are also deeply concerned about the scandalous delay, more than two years after its enactment, in giving full effect to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 which my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), with help from among others the then Minister for Health, piloted to the statute book with such humane concern.

Council leaders complained, even before the OPCS's survey on prevalence was published in September, about being turned into lawbreakers in regard to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. Yet we know that they are discharging their legal duties to only one fifth of the disabled people in need of services. While claiming to have increased benefits, the Government repeatedly have cut back the cash benefits for which we legislated. The link with earnings was scrapped at a cost of £14.40 a week to pensioner couples among whom the elderly disabled often suffer most hardship. They have to endure the double handicap of disability and deprivation.

Other major benefits we introduced were savaged by last April's cuts. Ministers may point to the mobility allowance as an example of a benefit increase under the present Government, but that allowance has gone up in excess of inflation due to my decision, as the then Minister, to link the mobility allowance to rises in motoring costs.

It really is intolerable that we still have had no oral statement to the House as to the Government's reaction to the two reports from the OPCS or to the Social Security Advisory Committee's report. Urgency is essential in the view of every major organisation of and for disabled people. I hope that the Leader of the House will give them some seasonal cheer tonight when he replies to the debate.

7.26 pm

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): I shall not take up the comments of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) about disability and the action that the Government have taken except his specific reference to me about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. He will recall that I made it clear on many occasions during the passage of that Bill that the various provisions would not be implemented until the Government found the necessary resources. It was understood by the sponsors of the Bill that there would be no immediate implementation of its important provisions. I certainly join him in hoping that those provisions which still need to be implemented will be implemented at the earliest moment that the Government feel able to devote the necessary resources and when local government, which is very involved in the matter, can join them in that decision.

The dominant theme of Christmastide is peace on earth. I warmly congratulate all those responsible for making this Christmas more hopeful for genuine lasting peace than anyone could have dared hope 12 months ago, and particularly for the recent developments in and around the centre of Christendom—Jerusalem. Particular congratulations should be directed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on their speedy and constructive response to Mr. Arafat's recent speech to the United Nations in Geneva. I imagine that all hon. Members will pray that that process will now continue so that peace can come to that troubled part of the world.

I wish to make four brief points, two on national issues and two on issues of local concern. First, I very much regret that child benefit is not included in tomorrow's uprating order for social security benefits. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and others will appreciate that our parliamentary procedures prevent a specific vote tomorrow on child benefit. I am sorry that the House should break for the Christmas recess without a clear opportunity being given to those hon. Members like myself who believe that child benefit should have been uprated to express their

belief in the Division Lobbies if necessary. Without entering detailed arguments, I recall that child benefit replaced child tax allowances.

I could imagine the reaction in the House and the country if in his Budget speech this year the Chancellor had said, "I am raising the single person's allowance, I am raising the married man's allowance, I am raising the age allowance, but for the second year running I am leaving child tax allowance unchanged." All hell would have broken loose, and rightly so. I urge the Government to examine the matter again and to carry out fully the pledge in our manifesto at the last election which I understood to mean that this benefit would not be left withering on the vine but would be uprated at least to take account of the rise in the cost of living.

My second subject is also linked with Christmas, when spending and domestic demand tend to rise. Already there are signs that higher interest rates are reducing demand, as the Chancellor intended. I hope that higher interest rates will also encourage savings—the other side of that coin that must always be remembered. I wish that the Government would find ways of discouraging the aggressive marketing of credit, especially to young people, and, at the same time, give a boost and impetus to savings in addition to the rise in interest rates.

I appreciate that housing-linked borrowing is the main factor in the increase in domestic credit, but the aggressive selling of credit cards, high street credit and loans fosters a mood of spend, spend, spend when what the nation requires now is a philosophy of save, save, save. Surely Treasury Ministers and officials can devise ways of achieving the latter. I am not seeking a return to physical controls on credit, or anything like that, but surely the Treasury can devise ways of encouraging responsible attitudes and discouraging the aggressive marketing of money.

Thirdly, many of my constituents are deeply unhappy that Parliament should rise for its Christmas recess while the most unwelcome and potentially damaging proposal to construct a major new road through Chiswick, along the route of the railway line from Kew bridge to Barnes, Putney and Clapham, remains on the table. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and his constituents are as horrified and vehemently opposed to that proposal as am I and my constituents.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): And in Wandsworth.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: I am delighted to receive the hon. Gentleman's support.

The plan was floated some years ago and was decisively rejected. It should never have seen the light of day again, and the sooner it is sunk without trace and utterly abandoned the better.

My final point—you will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am being brief because I know that many other hon. Members want to participate in the debate—involves my local hospital, the West Middlesex University hospital. It serves the local community with dedication and distinction, and its staff, at all levels, deserve thanks and praise. However, many of its buildings are old, decrepit and decayed. Plans to build a new, modern and efficient hospital have been under consideration for far too long. Two years ago the then Minister for Health promised early, final and formal approval of phase one of the rebuilding plans. However, departmental and Treasury approvals are still awaited.

My constituents and the hospital staff will be greatly disappointed if Parliament adjourns and Ministers leave Whitehall to celebrate Christmas without the rebuilding work being given the go-ahead. I send seasonal greetings to the Ministers and officials involved, but I hope that in wishing them well for the new year one of their early actions will be to give approval to phase one of the rebuilding plans. Such a decision will be warmly welcomed by the local community and will boost morale at our local hospital.

7.34 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I have risen rather early in the debate because, in fairness to the Leader of the House, he should have an opportunity to find out the answers to some of the questions I wish to ask and points I wish to raise.

Earlier today the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made a statement about what he called

"measures to assist the egg industry."

That gave away the Government's approach. It was not a statement to clarify the scale of the threat posed to consumers by salmonella in eggs nor about measures to make eggs safer to eat but about assisting the egg industry.

The Government's response to the increasing incidence of salmonella poisoning as a result of eating eggs is a story that ranges from buck-passing to positive lunacy by way of confusion and conflict. As a result of all that the Government have and have not done, the previously wholesome egg now carries a Government health warning. Thousands of traditional ways of using and eating eggs are apparently no longer safe. The Prime Minister talks about Victorian values but, even in pre-Victorian Britain, it was safe to eat eggs in ways that are no longer safe, at least if Jane Austen is to be believed. In "Emma", published in 1815, Mr. Woodhouse says:

"An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome."

It was not unwholesome in 1815 but we are told by the chief medical officer that now, towards the end of the 20th century, it is unwholesome. That shows how far the decline in the standards of the industry has gone.

We want to know how it has come about. How long has the problem been building up? I must put questions to the Leader of the House to which we have as yet received no answers. When was the Department of Health first aware of the scale of salmonella poisoning from eggs which led the chief medical officer to issue his warning on 26 August? When was the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food aware of the facts that led to the chief medical officer issuing that warning? Was the Ministry aware of the facts when it decided to stop funding the work on salmonella at the Institute of Food Research in Bristol? If so, why did it announce those cuts in funding in November? Did it think that the research was not necessary? Does the Ministry —a collection of incompetents—think it knows it all? If it does know it all, why has it come to the House today with a scheme that provides £17 million compensation for egg producers but does nothing to reduce salmonella in eggs? The eggs destroyed will not necessarily all be infected and the chickens to be gassed will not necessarily be from infected stocks.

The Minister said:

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"The scheme will enable up to 4 million hens—roughly equivalent to 10 per cent. of the laying flock—to be culled under the supervision of the Agriculture Departments."

Culling usually means that one identifies and gets rid of the weak and the diseased of those parts of the stock from which one does not want to breed. The Government have not proposed a cull in that sense. They are proposing what might be described as the random destruction of 10 million hens. It will do nothing to get rid of salmonella in eggs or chickens. The Minister's statement simply said that £17 million of Government money will be spent but the eggs being sold will be just as infected as they are now and the breeding chickens will be just as contaminated with salmonella as those alive now. That is preposterous. If £17 million of public money is to be spent, it should be directed at ensuring that people can buy eggs that are safe and sound.

Perhaps the most important remark made by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was in response to a direct question from my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). The Minister said,

"from the evidence available to me, it is not the case that most egg production is infected."

That is a flat contradiction of the statement made by the former Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who said:

"Most of the egg production in this country is infected with salmonella."

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is time that the Government stated clearly that poultry and eggs from Northern Ireland have never been associated with salmonella? We are suffering badly because of the foolishness that failed to expose that, and caused the problem in the first place.

Mr. Dobson: If what the hon. Gentleman says is correct —and I have no reason to doubt it—the Government are obliged to make it clear that eggs from Northern Ireland are not contaminated. That would be only fair to egg producers in Northern Ireland and, more important, egg consumers throughout the rest of the country.

Is the statement made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South that most of the egg production is infected correct, or is that by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, that most of the egg production is not affected correct? If the Minister is right, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South must have been wrong. Either one was right and the other was wrong. There is no way of fudging it.

If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South was wrong, why was her statement not corrected until today? On Monday 5 December, the Secretary of State for Health answered a private notice question but never once said that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South was wrong. On Tuesday 13 December, the Prime Minister, no less, was asked about salmonella and eggs, but did not say that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South was wrong. On 15 December, in response to a specific question asked by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister passed up the opportunity to correct the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South by saying that she was wrong.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South has resigned, which was the honourable thing to do. Did she do so because she was wrong? We still have not received an answer to that question. Clearly, her remarks led to a massive drop in egg consumption, but if she was right, why did she have to resign? If she was telling the truth and egg consumption fell, that was not her fault. If she was wrong, why was she not corrected by the Secretary of State for Health, who had an opportunity to do so in the House, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who also had an opportunity to do so in the House, or the Prime Minister, on the innumerable occasions when she had the opportunity to put the record straight? God knows, the Prime Minister is not usually reluctant to correct people; indeed, it might be described as her forte. She took no steps to suggest that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South was wrong.

No one knows what the truth is. Was the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food telling the truth today about the scale of the infection? Given her failure to say so, presumably the Prime Minister does not agree. It would appear that until now she has agreed with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South. Two weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) asked the Prime Minister to take scientific advice to put the record straight. He asked when it would be done, whether the Prime Minister proposed to adjudicate between the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and when the Government would clear up the discrepancy between the two Departments. Many hon. Members are beginning to think that once the former Under-Secretary of State for Health resigned, she was used as a resignation fire-break, to ensure that the buck stopped short of her boss or bosses. If the former Under-Secretary was wrong, they were wrong, because they have not corrected her. If she was right, they were negligent, not only in the short-term regarding the crisis that followed the remarks of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, but for a longer period by allowing this epidemic to reach a stage at which the chief medical officer has had to advise people not to eat eggs in the way that they have traditionally done for centuries.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will my hon. Friend take into account that this has affected not only the poultry industry but manufacturing concerns that have not been mentioned by the Government? In my constituency, a firm that manufactures poultry equipment has not received an order for a fortnight, thereby putting jobs in jeopardy. The Government, with typical concern for the farming industry, have turned a blind eye to this important issue.

Mr. Dobson: The reduction in egg consumption has had a massive knock-on effect. The problem is that this is entirely typical of the Government's short-term approach. They have proposed reductions in research into salmonella to cut public spending. They would have spent far less on research than the £17 million that they are paying in compensation to egg producers. It is entirely typical of the Government's short-term approach to everything, especially safety. Instead of investing to ensure that things are safe, the Government want to save money on every budget. What happened? The public rumbled what was wrong. It is not only the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South who led to the reduction in egg consumption; people had noticed the subdued efforts of the Department of Health to draw attention to what was wrong. Already

suspicious people noted what the former Under-Secretary said rather more spectacularly than the press statements of the Department of Health and took the matter seriously.

The Government owe it to the people of this country, including egg producers, to set the record straight and to rid chicken flocks and eggs of salmonella. The Government are doing nothing to achieve that, but are spending £17 million on a random destruction of chickens and eggs that has nothing to do with salmonella but everything to do with compensation. Until we receive specific answers to the questions that I have asked and, more important, until the people of this country are satisfied by straight, well-informed answers from the Government, egg consumption will not return to the levels that prevailed before.

Why should people buy eggs when they are being advised by the most senior medical officer that certain aspects of egg consumption are dangerous? The Government owe it to the people of this country, egg producers and the House to give some specific answers before Christmas and put the record straight. The record may be put straight if some of the other Ministers—who are far more involved and have had more protracted responsibility for this matter than the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South—resign. Until that happens, no one will trust anything that any of them says. They have been covering up and have been unwilling to say that the former Under-Secretary was wrong. If they thought that she was wrong, they should have said it in good time, and perhaps the crisis would not have arisen. If they thought that she was right, they have been negligent, and by continuing in this way have extended their negligence. We need answers before the House rises for Christmas. If we do not get answers, the Government will have to talk about further compensation to egg producers, because people will not consume eggs at the previous level until they are satisfied that they are safe.

7.49 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): There are many good reasons why the House should not rise on Thursday. Hon. Members have heard some, but I propose to add another.

On occasions such as this, I normally attempt to interest the Government in paying war service credit to overseas Civil Service pensioners—a credit of which they have hitherto been deprived. At last, the Government recently decided to pay pensioners their due entitlement. It will mean the expenditure of about £6 million, and it will benefit about 6,000 former Colonial Service officers now in retirement—including, I am obliged to say, myself. Therefore, I record our gratitude to the Government and to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who I believe was partially responsible for that gesture. It is a matter of justice to people who deserve to have justice done to them after the service that they provided for the British people over the past half century.

The issue that justifies my saying that the House should not rise for the Christmas recess concerns the appalling damage that is being done to British interests by the isolation of the United Kingdom Parliament from the European Parliament. We seem to operate in two watertight containers. There is almost no proper liaison between the two Parliaments. One consequence of that is the British people's apathy towards the European Parliament.

Today's news of the result of the Hampshire, Central Euro by-election, recording a poll of only 14 per cent. of the population, shows how uninterested British people are in European affairs, despite all the efforts of national political parties, with all that they have to gain by interesting voters in a particular by-election. It illustrates also a new danger that faces us as we move towards 1992 and the operation of the Single European Act.

The reasons for that apathy can be shown in several ways. One dates back to the time when the House mistakenly voted—I admit that I was one who voted for them—for direct elections to the European Parliament. The result was to deprive individual Members of any knowledge of or experience in the European Parliament and the European dimension of British politics. We returned about 81 British Members to the European Parliament, none of whom, apart from three Northern Ireland exceptions, was a Member of this Parliament or had any direct connection with it or with British parliamentary elections. Apathy is due also to the hostility and blind prejudice of a minority of politicians in this country, especially those in the Labour party, towards the European Parliament. The European Parliament has immense, increasing power over our livelihoods and destinies in Britain. Another reason for apathy is Government inaction in attempting to cure the problem.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend is present, because this matter concerns him. We have made too few attempts to make Members of the European Parliament welcome in this place. They are treated like members of the public, having to queue up to come in and not being allowed to use the facilities that should be extended to Members of not merely another Parliament but a Parliament that is supposed to subsume within it all the affairs and interests of this country. We treat them abominably, and we should do something about it.

We deprive ourselves of much parliamentary talent, knowledge and experience by sending our Members to serve on the Council of Europe and on the Western European Union, where, no doubt, they learn a great deal. They may be of some benefit in debates in this House when they return. I am talking about a Council of Europe that is more or less a talking shop. We have no direct representation in the European Parliament, which has so much power over this country. The Single European Act has changed matters. It is no longer possible for any member of a national party to pretend that we are not affected by decisions of the European Parliament. The problems of liaison, connections, joint consultation and negotiations have become urgent, and we must tackle them. They are primarily a House of Commons matter.

We must compare what has been done in this House with what has been done in the other place. We have one Committee, the Select Committee on European Legislation, led, at the moment, by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who is an excellent Chairman. However, the Committee only scrutinises the legislation and other documents that come to us from the European Parliament, and assesses their relative importance. That is all it does. It is just one Committee of a few hon. Members, and it receives little attention in this place. The House of Lords has a Committee with a much broader brief on the affairs of the European Community. It has six sub-committees which, judging by their membership, are pretty high-powered. Most of that Committee's members

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

are experienced, qualified persons who know a great deal about the European Community and the problems that are common to us both.

We must examine our arrangements and future liaisons. For that purpose, we need an all-party approach. I do not just mean that all hon. Members should be involved in the arrangements; I mean that each political party in the House should consider how to get closer to our colleagues in the European Parliament to discuss how our party objectives can be strengthened and made more realisable. We need joint parliamentary and party committees in the sense in which we have Select Committees and party committees in the House. We need joint Committees with Members of the European Parliament representing British constituencies. They should meet regularly on fixed dates both here and in Brussels. They should examine, with proper back-up and research staff, matters that will ultimately be dealt with in the European Parliament, especially matters affecting the internal market.

At present, we do nothing to prepare ourselves for the great onslaught, in a parliamentary sense, from Europe. We need Joint Committees of Members of this House and of British Members of the European Parliament so that they can meet to consider those problems and to offer advice to the House, and to the parties within it, on how to tackle those matters and any questions that arise. Such Committees could report back to us both directly, through publications and through subsequent debates.

This matter has been wholly ignored until now. That is not the fault only of the Opposition, who are determined to ignore Europe and the Community, and it is not the fault only of the Government, who must provide the initiative. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is not keen on the European Community, but he is keen on British interests and the improvement of Britain's prospects in every forum in the world. Joint Committees would give us a chance, and a duty, to take the opportunities in Europe to our advantage. We cannot afford to behave as though the Community does not exist or as though we shall come out of Europe. Some hon. Members argue that we shall eventually come out of Europe. Nevertheless, they are wrong to think that we can ignore Europe completely.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My hon. Friend knows far more about these matters than I do. Can he give one example of a way in which the European Parliament affects his or my constituents, given the powers that it has?

Mr. Stanbrook: That misunderstanding is shared by many of our colleagues. The European Parliament has a different perspective on the problems of this country. Under the Single European Act, the whole country will be affected by decisions taken in Strasbourg or Brussels, because this country's economy is strongly affected by the decisions of the European Parliament, which has control over the budget and over economic policies. My hon. Friend demonstrates that he would rather that it had not, or that he believes that such control does not exist. It does exist, and it has existed for many years. It is getting stronger and it is time that we recognised that and made the best of our connections with the European Parliament.

8.4 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): When I heard the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) talk about the European Parliament and elections to it, I was tempted to use the opportunity to talk about direct elections by means of proportional representation, but I resisted the temptation on this occasion. No doubt the House will be grateful for that.

The issue that I want to raise relates to the provision throughout the country of Post Office counter services, and especially the provision of sub-post offices and community post offices. I also want to talk about the decision by Post Office Counters to regrade many Crown post offices to the level of sub-post office, which will affect many constituencies and which has had a particular effect in my own constituency in recent weeks. I should welcome some time to discuss that before the Christmas recess. We await a response from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

It would be helpful to debate the matter because many hon. Members have had the experience of approaching the Post Office with particular queries and being told that, as the Post Office has to operate within the parameters set down by the Government, the argument is not with the Post Office but with the Government. When one takes the argument to the Minister, one is told that such matters are daily operational matters with which the Post Office must deal. I should therefore welcome an opportunity fully to air these matters, which are of serious concern to many of my constituents.

Over the past 18 months, community post offices have developed. Many of us believed that that development was being used to disguise the fact that part-time sub-post office facilities were being introduced, with a consequent reduction in salary for sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses and reduced opening times. Another effect was to reduce the market value of existing sub-post offices. The Post Office has argued that a reduction in hours has been necessary to ensure the continuation of post offices in particular communities and that must be a matter of concern to the communities involved.

It is important to continue to monitor the impact of these changes to ensure that the Post Office is fulfilling its statutory social obligation to preserve a comprehensive network of post offices throughout the country, especially in remote rural areas where post office facilities are a necessary strand in the fabric of rural life. Post offices in such areas fulfil not only a service function, but an important social function. Many people are concerned that, although the Post Office has been trying to ensure the continuation of such a network, the Department of Social Security has sought actively to woo customers away from sub-post offices by encouraging them to use banking facilities, such as direct credit, for their benefits, especially pensions and child benefit. Much needs to be done to persuade people that it is in their interests to keep the service provided by local post offices and that if they do not use that service, they may lose it.

Another worrying aspect of the exercise has been the so-called consultation process. I have received one letter from a community council in my constituency which says:

"to call such exercises consultation is a sham. We still fear further reductions and withdrawal of services, which could seriously damage local communities."

It is widely felt that, far from being consultation, it is merely passing on information. It would be interesting to know in how many cases the consultative process has led to significant changes in the original proposals, rather than tinkering with matters such as an hour here or changing from a Thursday to a Wednesday there. Has the process ever helped to retain an existing service?

People also fear the regrading of Crown post offices. I draw attention to the word regrading. In practice, that means the downgrading of Crown post offices to sub-post offices. In its submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Post Office Counters said that it intended to downgrade 750 Crown post offices in the near future. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission advocated that it should go further than that. The fear about what will happen not only to the service but to jobs has led to the recent industrial action. Such industrial action is understandable, although I cannot readily see that it advances the argument for trying to keep the present status of Crown post offices.

No doubt the problem of Crown post offices has been experienced by many hon. Members in their own constituencies. In my own constituency, the Crown post office at Stromness in Orkney is under threat. Stromness does not have a large population but it has a distinctive character and serves a wide hinterland. As the Post Office generally accepted in its discussions with the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, local communities see the change in status as being an attack on the status of the town itself. The question of public service arises. Stromness post office is purpose-built and centrally situated, so people found it strange that the Post Office should argue that one reason for moving it would be to find a position where it might benefit more people. There is no location in the town that local people consider to be an improvement on the present site.

The Post Office has argued:

"the proposals do not involve office closures nor do they involve any reduction in the full range of facilities we offer to our customers."

Few people believe that one gets something for nothing, so few people believe that there can be a change in status that involves cutting costs and yet enables the wide range of services to continue to exist.

I have been assured that the wide range of services will continue to exist. To the extent that that means that on day one of the operation of the downgraded system services will be the same as on the previous day, I accept that, but many people are worried about what the level of service will be one year or five years hence. What will the change mean in terms of employee training? No doubt some sub-postmasters will incorporate their sub-post office within their shop, and some people fear that if that happens the quality of training and the service provided by staff will suffer. If someone behind the counter is selling ironmongery products at one moment and dealing with driving licence applications the next, he will not necessarily provide the same quality of service as the person who has been purpose trained to provide post office services.

There is also the fear that, once a post office has been downgraded to sub-post office status, it will be much easier to change hours, cut services or go part-time at some later date. It is important to take a stand at this stage to try to ensure the continuation of the full range of services that a Crown post office can provide.

I sought reassurances from the local area manager that if Stromness were downgraded it would still be providing the same level of service as the Crown post office in Kirkwall, five years from now. He replied that he could not guarantee any services in perpetuity but said:

"By way of assurance, there is no precedent for clients reducing the size of the network used; as I said, they and we want more business and the tendency is for increases in outlets. What I can say is that no service will cease because of the regrading exercise."

However, it was apparent from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report that the Home Office insists on Crown office facilities alone being used for the issue of British visitors' passports. That conflicts with the assurances given about guaranteeing the service. The report also said that another reason for maintaining the Crown post offices was to ensure the security of location. That is a pertinent argument, as it is feared that security of location would be lost if the post office were downgraded.

What it boils down to is that many people feel that the Post Office is no longer providing a service as such but is having to focus its operations on a profit and loss account. Increasingly the concept of public service—to which many Post Office employees have given much of their lives—is being lost. In 21 paragraphs of conclusions and recommendations in the section of the MMC report concerning the activity of the Crown post offices there is only one mention of the customer. Sadly, the needs of customers are constantly overlooked.

Let me conclude with a positive observation. The Post Office repeatedly tells us that it is carrying out its operations in an increasingly competitive climate. Section 58 of the British Telecommunications Act 1981 sets a limit on what the Post Office may and may not do at its various places of operation. It appears, however, that the statutory restrictions on the business that the Post Office can transact mean that in this increasingly competitive market the Post Office is trying to act with one arm tied behind its back. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has suggested in the past that he will do something about that at some stage, but as yet nothing has been forthcoming. It would be welcome if the Secretary of State could announce before Christmas that he proposes to relax restrictions on the Post Office so that Post Office Counters can make better use of its space and sites—many of them prime sites—to expand its activities so that it can operate in a more commercially competitive manner.

Finally, what can the Post Office do to assist in the implementation of the poll tax? I accept that it is rare for Opposition Members to suggest ways of helping with the collection of the poll tax but we accept that, once the tax is law, we should obey the law and we feel that we should seek ways of making it work to the advantage of another service. Using the network of sub-post offices, with computers linked into a terminal at the local authority headquarters, we could provide an on-the-spot facility for people to pay their poll tax by regular instalments. That service could be on hand for the payers of the community charge. It would also provide a new source of revenue for the Post Office. It has been suggested that the Post Office has not been as enthusiastic and quick as it might have been in picking up that possible extra source of business. I hope that—in the early months of the new year, if not before Christmas—the Post Office will consider that proposition, which would enable it to underpin its existing

[Mr. James Wallace]

network of services which many of us—especially those who represent rural areas—look forward to its providing for many years to come.

8.15 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Before my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) leaves the Chamber, let me say this to him. He mentioned the Government's concession on overseas pensioners. It should not go unrecorded that he played a major part in achieving that concession. Several of my constituents have written to me to say what a great part he played in this matter, and I pay tribute to him now.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) talked about the Post Office, and I intend to follow him briefly on that matter. All of us who know and respect the Post Office and know what vital work it does for our people are disturbed by the state of its industrial relations recently. I do not attribute a reason to that. In my own town of Melton Mowbray, there have been three extremely damaging disputes in the Post Office this year, one of which was the national strike. Not long ago no mail was delivered in Melton Mowbray for two and a half weeks.

I have no intention of apportioning blame in this matter. I have suggested to the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson, that he ask ACAS or the Industrial Society to undertake a proper impartial investigation of industrial relations in the Post Office. We need to know why the difficulties exist and how they can be properly and effectively addressed so that we do not have more industrial disputes which are ruinous to business. If Sir Bryan Nicholson does not reply soon, I shall have to press Ministers, because we cannot allow this disruption to continue.

The second matter that I want to raise with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House concerns the complete mess into which the Government have got themselves over the provisions in the Education Reform Act dealing with school visits and trips. I am extremely disturbed by the number of head teachers and other teachers in my constituency who have discussed with me the proposals for charging. I also received a worrying letter from the director of education of Leicestershire county council. Teachers have suggested that, because of the prohibition—with which I suspect most of us would agree in the abstract and which was introduced for a good reason following a court judgment—school swimming trips will have to be stopped at rural schools and museum trips and so on will be increasingly difficult to arrange.

When I wrote to the Secretary of State, I received a disappointing reply from a junior Minister, and as a result I have written back. I implore my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to ask the Secretary of State to discuss the matter immediately with the organisations representing teachers—especially head teachers, as they are the most worried. Rural schools cannot give up educational and other important trips simply because one person refuses on principle to pay a charge and because the schools have no money to finance them. Head teachers have made it plain to me that they will not hold trips if people exercise their right not to pay; they will not put a child in that embarrassing position. The Government have got themselves into a muddle, and the sooner they get it sorted out, the better. The new regulations do not come into force until 1 April, so there is still time.

Rural maternity units are immensely important. Leicestershire health authority, in an extreme lack of wisdom, wants to close all the rural maternity units there, including two in my constituency. Trent region has already closed too many and is well in the lead of an extremely unhappy league table of regional health authorities closing rural maternity units. Leicestershire wants to close them in Melton Mowbray and Oakham, in my constituency. I went into all this in an Adjournment debate on 9 November which was answered by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who was then Under-Secretary of State. Neither I nor my constituents were happy with her reply.

Rural maternity units are absolutely essential for women who live in rural areas. They do not want to travel 30 or 40 miles on foggy or snowy roads to have their babies in large units in general hospitals in large towns. It is not that they have anything against large towns or hospitals, which are good, but they regard their rural maternity units as personal, local and friendly. They want to see the Government stick up for them and not agree to proposals to close them. I must warn my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), the new Under-Secretary, that I shall nag him as much as I nagged his predecessor until he reprieves those two units.

What is happening and when will the ombudsman report on Barlow Clowes? I read carefully, as I am sure most hon. Members did, the report prepared by Sir Godfray Le Quesne. I did not agree with the view of the Department of Trade and Industry that that report cleared the Government. It did not. The Department of Trade and Industry has much to answer for regarding the handling of the matter. I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that, as soon as the ombudsman's report is available, it is brought before the House and decisions are made. The handling of the matter does the Government little credit and I still believe that they have a duty to pay compensation. I shall watch this matter closely and press my right hon. Friend for early action.

My final point refers to a matter which I have raised several times at business questions and which involves all hon. Members. We all have the honour and duty of showing our constituents round the House. Let it be remembered that this is their Parliament, not ours. We are here as trustees for them and on their behalf. They have every right to see their Parliament appropriately. It is of great regret to me and hon. Members on both sides that our constituents have to queue in the rain, cold and snow for a considerable time to get into the House of Lords through the necessary security arrangements.

When my right hon. Friend first came to the House there were no such arrangements. People walked in. We know that those days have gone and, alas, will never return, and that there must be security arrangements. But it is absolutely unreasonable for elderly people and children to have to stand for long periods to get into their Parliament. If the House of Lords is making difficulties about this, and if the heritage bodies say that we cannot have awnings because they are too ugly—we have them for the state opening—please let us reverse the line of route and start it in Westminster Hall so that people can stand where it is dry rather than outside in the rain and snow. I know that my right hon. Friend is involved in this and is

having discussions with the House of Lords. I urge him to get this sorted out and to think if the British people who want to see their Parliament and not get soaking wet while doing so.

8.23 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): On behalf of my constituents who travel much further than many on the mainland for visits to the Palace of Westminster, I entirely support the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). We all welcome the good sense of his suggestion and look forward to its implementation for the benefit of our constituents.

I am grateful for this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House before the Christmas recess the concern of all of us in Northern Ireland who care about Harland and Wolff and the continuance of this great and internationally acclaimed modern shipyard. Elected representatives of the constitutional parties, trade unionists, cross-community church leaders, management and workers, together with the captains of Northern Ireland industry, as represented by the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, all seek a secure future for the Belfast shipyard.

Past Government investment, skilful management, and co-operation by trade union representatives and workers have transformed Harland and Wolff into a high-tech yard, the products of which, together with those of Shorts, demonstrate throughout the world the skills and enterprise of the engineering work force in Northern Ireland.

We are concerned about and almost demoralised by the mishandling of the privatisation exercise of Northern Ireland companies which the Government seek to transfer to the private sector. The uncertainty of the past 12 months must be removed. Business confidence is being eroded by the negative approach to privatisation of Ministers, Government spokesmen and the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland.

There is a feeling of outrage and anger at the disgraceful handling of privatisation in Northern Ireland when comparisons are made with the successful transfer of companies from the public to the private sector elsewhere in the United Kingdom. We have witnessed elsewhere the building of companies to provide them with a sound financial structure to ease their transition into the private sector, whereas in Northern Ireland there has been almost a destructive campaign of denigration from official sources which has damaged early prospects of a transfer of Harland and Wolff to the private sector. Despite that, the company board has supported privatisation, provided that it is carried out on a sound basis.

Government action to date has not been helpful. The company is excluded from tendering for new Ministry of Defence work until it is privatised and it has been blocked from securing any new merchant orders. More than $550 million of new work has been turned away. That included the Ultimate Dream—a concept which had wide cross-party support in the House for the largest, most innovative cruise liner in the world—and a £10 million order for a dredger that could have led to orders for a series of such vessels. All those new ships would have resulted in Harland and Wolff placing orders with 1,200 companies in the United Kingdom to the value of more than £200 million. The United Kingdom marine equipment and engineering industries as well as Belfast shipyard are losers. Is that obstruction and are the obstacles placed before Harland and Wolff calculated to assist closure or encourage privatisation?

Shipbuilding in Belfast plays a major role in the Northern Ireland economy as a whole. Demoralisation is widespread among the 3,500 employees at the yard, among the thousands employed in 680 small businesses in Northern Ireland which supply goods and services to the shipyard and among the workers' families. Business confidence has been seriously eroded and evidence of a more constructive, positive approach by Ministers and officials in the days ahead is required in order successfully to transfer Harland and Wolff to the private sector.

The threat to Shorts of a potential breakup of that company after its transfer to the private sector is not being ruled out by the Government's financial advisers. That is causing enormous unease about the future of aircraft manufacturing in Belfast. Predators interested in only one segment of the Shorts' business could, alongside the existing threat to shipbuilding jobs, create an industrial wasteland in east Belfast. The last thing we need on top of our other difficulties is discontent in another wide section of the community. More large-scale unemployment could cause further instability in a society already suffering deep social strains.

I urge Ministers to be more careful in their stewardship of Northern Ireland and to demonstrate positive action, by which I mean commitment to that part of the United Kingdom and its industries. There is a perception, which I hope will shortly be disproved, that too often appointment to the Northern Ireland Office is but a phase in an hon. Members political career. When Ministers and civil servants appear to speak negatively against our major industries, we are left to wonder who is working for and on behalf of Northern Ireland. People in Northern Ireland should not be forced to conclude that some Ministers are more interested in self-promotion than advancing causes such as privatisation in a sensible, responsible and positive way.

There has been no word of resistance from the management—of the companies concerned and the proposed management-employee buy-out of the shipyards should be explored constructively. The Government can show good will, good faith and intention successfully to transfer Harland and Wolff, Belfast to the private sector by permitting the company to tender for new contracts, including Ministry of Defence work, by resolving the issue of performance guarantees, and by spelling out whether, after privatisation, intervention funding or additional funding will be part of the financial package offered.

The Government should accept the preferred way forward of the management, who wish to embark on the Ultimate Dream project, and allow the company to build its future workload around this prestigious project. Management and workers deserve financial support to protect existing jobs and training opportunities for our young people. Job losses in manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland are difficult to replace. We all welcome the recent achievements in job creation, although we are conscious that those new jobs barely match demand from school leavers.

Our shipyard will be saved if the Government have the will to find a way forward with the workers and management. We trust that that good will will be

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

forthcoming and that a satisfactory solution will be quickly found which will have the support of all hon. Members.

I hope that, even before the House adjourns, a statement will be made by the Government which will usher in a bright new year for all those who depend for employment on Harland and Wolff shipyard, Belfast.

8.32 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I believe that the House should not go into the Christmas recess before tackling an important and growing threat to road safety. While I applaud the campaign run by the Department of Transport in relation to drink driving, so far it has neglected to turn its attention to the growing menace of the dangerous use of car telephones. More and more one sees drivers driving along holding the receiver of a car telephone with one hand, while the other hand is on the steering wheel. That is a dangerous practice which needs to be curbed. If the car is equipped with an automatic gear change, it can, of course, be controlled reasonably with one hand until such time as it is necessary to steer round a corner, when it becomes more dangerous. If, however, the car has a manual gear change, a phone in one hand and a gearstick in the other leaves the driver with no hand on the steering wheel.

Some phones are equipped with a dialling facility in the handset. Some drivers will rest the handset on the lower quarter of the steering wheel and dial the digits for the number while simultaneously steering the wheel, which is another dangerous practice that needs to be curbed.

Other phones have a dialling facility on a separate console, possibly fixed near the radio or somewhere near the gear lever. Perhaps the handset does not have to be lifted to dial the number but the result is that the driver's eyes are taken off the road.

The problems, therefore, with car telephones are that, first, the driver holds the handset in one hand and steers the wheel with the other; secondly, a call is dialled in such a way as to take the driver's eyes off the road; thirdly, bad visibility is caused when the handset is held in the hand, because vision is restricted on that side of the car; fourthly, there is general distraction and lack of concentration.

I would not wish for one moment to seek to curtail the use of car telephones in any major respect. I believe that they are now widely accepted as a great advantage in business; in fact, some businesses depend very much on their use. Also, they are often an asset for personal communication, although I would draw the line at those who insist on receiving and making calls during theatre performances.

The House should urgently enact measures to ensure that car telephones are used more safely. So far, there have been comparatively few accidents which it could be said to be directly attributable to the careless use of car phones. However, the growth of their use shows that it will only be a matter of time before they are a significant ingredient in more and more accidents. In 1985, 31,500 car telephones were in use in the United Kingdom. By January 1988, that had risen to 210,000, and by August there were 300,000 car telephones. It is forecast that there will be half a million car telephones by the end of next year and five million in the year 2000. That shows how important it is that they should be used carefully and that the risk to road safety is a growing one.

All that the highway code says on the subject is:

"Do not use a hand-held microphone or telephone handset while your vehicle is moving—except in an emergency".

But the highway code is, of course, only advisory. It places on drivers the responsibility to have proper control of their vehicles at all times—but no more than that. That section of the highway code is neither adequate nor sufficiently specific. People are not heeding it, perhaps because they are not reading it.

Careless use of car telephones could also give rise, under section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 to offences of driving without due care and attention. In some circumstances a charge may be brought under this section, but that has always been regarded as a sweep-up provision, where it was difficult to be more precise about the exact nature of the offence being committed. I believe, however, that it is possible to be more precise about the way in which car telephones should be used. Enforcement would be difficult. Effective enforcement involves being able to monitor and stop motorists when they are using them carelessly. In those cases where no accident results, enforcement is difficult.

Some people would argue that such an attempt to restrict the way in which car telephones are used would amount to an attack on individual freedom. Those arguments were widely deployed in the House when we considered the compulsory wearing of seat belts. Some people would also be ready to argue that restrictions on the way car telephones are used would lead to attempts, for example, subsequently to stop people smoking at the same time as driving a car. That would take matters much too far. An alternative approach is to look at the instruments themselves to see the way in which they are designed and fitted. That route would present the best solution.

All car telephones should be equipped with a remote microphone and a remote loudspeaker. Many systems already have such equipment, which ensures that it is unnecessary to hold the receiver in the hand while speaking. Some people argue that extraneous noise levels, especially when driving on the motorway, make it extremely difficult to use such telephones effectively. However, contrary evidence suggests that the latest equipment with high-quality microphones and remote loudspeakers would allow motorway driving and telephoning to be combined comparatively easily.

Should car telephones be compulsorily fitted with voice-activated dialling? The technology already exists, but there are many disadvantages. It is said that voice-activated dialling is unreliable and that it may require reprogramming if a different driver is using the equipment or a call is made by a passenger. Voice-activated dialling is also very expensive. A less expensive way in which to achieve a similar result would be to permit only pre-programmed single or double-digit short-call dialling while the car is moving.

Another change would be to ensure that the dialling apparatus is always positioned on top of the fascia at windscreen level. Therefore, in so far as the driver's eyes must be averted from the road when dialling even a short-call number, his eyes would remain in the line of vision of the windscreen and other road users.

Such changes in the design and fitting of equipment —I stress equipment, rather than the way in which it is used—would limit the scope for a driver to cause danger while using a telephone when the vehicle is in motion. The problem does not arise when a telephone is used by a passenger or when the vehicle is stationary. Although a driver may be able to stop to make a call, he cannot readily stop when the time comes to receive one. Most drivers, however, do neither.

I believe that such changes are urgent, and they would enhance road safety. I hope that the Leader of the House will consider my suggestions seriously.

8.42 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I wish to discuss the holding of remand prisoners in either police cells or magistrates court cells because it is a continuing problem that, sadly, never seems to be resolved. The system started as long ago as 1980 when the then Home Secretary, now Lord Whitelaw, introduced it. He said then that it was temporary, yet eight years later, not only is it still operating, but the numbers involved have increased enormously. People are now moved for greater distances to be kept in police or magistrates court cells.

Over the years, many excuses have been given for keeping people in such cells, but I find it hard to accept many of them. It is important to discuss this matter tonight because the conditions under which men and women are being kept are an utter disgrace. If the Government still allow the system to continue eight years after it was introduced, I find it hard to accept why they have refused to improve the conditions under which people are kept.

I shall quote some figures to give the Leader of the House an idea of the problem. In 1982, when records were being kept, 42 people were in police cells or magistrates court cells in England and Wales. In a reply that I received today from the Home Office I am informed that, on the latest available figures, at 31 October 1988, 1,531 prisoners, most of whom were on remand, were being held in police cells. Therefore, in eight years, the numbers of people held in such cells has increased from 42 to more than 1,500. They are held in many parts of the country, no matter where they are due to appear in court. One of my constituents appeared in a London court and was then moved to police cells in Northampton. When his relatives went to see him, the police told them it was inconvenient.

I received a letter dated 12 December from the wife of a man who is being held now at Bow road police station in London. She says:

"He has been on remand for eight weeks in various police stations and prisons throughout London and as far as Grimsby in the north."

Yet that man must appear at a London court.

We all know that remand prisoners who are held in prison have certain rights under the prison rules, yet those rights do not extend to anyone being held in a police cell or in a magistrates court cell. In prison, if one is dissatisfied about the conditions under which one is kept, one can complain to the number one governor, the wing governor or the boards of visitors. One has a statutory right to complain about the conditions under which one is kept, but if one is kept in police cells or in magistrates court cells, the only person to whom one can complain is the officer in charge or a member of the lay visitors. If one complains, however, the answer is "Sorry. There is very little we can do. We don't have the proper facilities to hold you here for a long time."

Let us consider the conditions of such prisoners. Invariably there is a lack of space, and often the only means of keeping one's possessions is in plastic bags. The cells are often impossible to keep properly clean and there is often no clean bedding. Someone who is held in a police cell or in a magistrates court cell may suffer from an infectious disease. That person may be moved or released, but the next person who is allocated the cell will be sleeping in the same bedding.

The heating and ventilation in many such cells is non-existent. Often the meals are poor; and there is no provision for those with special diets. The facilities for medical treatment are poor; people often have to wait a long time before they see a doctor. We are aware that, sadly, people suffering from mental illness are put in such cells, yet we know from all the available records that they should not be kept under such conditions.

Opportunities for exercise are often lacking. Wandsworth prison is in my constituency and I often receive complaints about the lack of exercise, but at least those facilities exist. In many police stations or magistrates courts, there are no facilities for people to exercise, however short that exercise time may be.

Washing facilities are an utter disgrace and often there is no privacy. A report dated 24 November, which was presented to the Wandsworth police consultative committee, of which I am a member, recorded what was reported to the committee by lay visitors:

"Lay Visitors are currently attempting to effect improvements in arrangements for female remand prisoners and also to ensure that remand prisoners can enjoy some privacy when making use of washing facilities . . . This has already led to at least one complaint from a female remand prisoner as regards the lack of privacy in the presence of male police officers. This problem is compounded because the wash basin at the Lavender Hill Police Station (the only washing facility available) is not enclosed."

Such lack of privacy would be bad enough for many men, who would say they were entitled to privacy when taking a shower or bath—if such things were available. We all know how our wives and daughters would feel if, sad to say, they found themselves in these conditions.

All this has been happening for a long time. Senior police officers have often told me that these people should not be in police cells. The police do not have the facilities to keep remand prisoners for a long time, or the experience to do the job. Police staff who are allocated to look after remand prisoners take up time that could be used for other work.

I am delighted to see the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on the Treasury Bench; this subject, I hope, greatly concerns the Home Office. The sad thing about the number of people who are still held in police stations or magistrates courts on remand is that space is available in prisons up and down the country. I shall not go into detail this evening, but the Under-Secretary knows that that is a fact. Many held in police cells ultimately receive no custodial sentence. We must bear in mind the fact that, when Lord Whitelaw introduced the system in 1980, he made it clear that it was temporary. My plea is that courts should show far more concern about the number of people whom they place in custody on remand—there does not seem to be great concern now.

[Mr. Tom Cox]

The Home Secretary and the Home Office must stop this practice. It could be stopped, and many people involved in penal matters in the country believe that the time to stop it is now. Eight years is long enough: what was supposed to be a temporary provision must now be ended. I hope that, in the near future—even before Christmas—we shall hear a statement from the Government that the system will at long last be ended.

8.53 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House rises for Christmas it should consider three matters concerned with love—that which makes the world go round.

The first is hospital radio. I am the voluntary spokesman for the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations. On 14 February next year there will be an "I love hospital radio broadcasting" day. There will be a lobby of the House, whose members will ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to zero-rate VAT on hospital radio broadcasting equipment—in other words, to treat our charity in the same way as talking newspapers for the blind. This would mean only a small amount of money to the Treasury but a great deal to all the enthusiastic volunteers in the association. Ours is the largest registered charity with no paid officers in the United Kingdom. Every penny goes into the service. There are 330 stations in the United Kingdom, many serving more than one hospital.

Many hon. Members will realise that much of the equipment being used in hospital for radio broadcasting is breaking down, so it is important that the Home Office look favourably on our application for a broadcast frequency allocation for hospital radio—a single frequency. That would help considerably with the costs that we incur for radio headsets.

My second point about love has to do with the erection of memorials in cemeteries. Many people would ask why we should bother about them, as so many believe in cremation, but I think that many people are concerned about the quality and type of memorials that are permitted in cemeteries.

The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 empowers a burial authority, in general a local council, to grant the right to put up a tombstone or other memorial, subject to such conditions as it thinks proper. Paragraph 3 of the same order gives authorities a general power of management to

"do all such things as they consider necessary or desirable for the proper management, regulation and control of a cemetery."

So local authorities can make such rules as they wish about the size and appearance of gravestones. There are no general guidelines in the form of byelaws.

Many constituents are worried from time to time about what they see as unreasonable rules and regulations laid down by local churches or local authorities, which do not show enough compassion in allowing different types of memorials. I know of one family who live in an east end constituency who have spent about two years trying to come to an agreement with their local authority about the sort of memorial that they are permitted to erect.

My final point about love concerns the "I love Basildon" campaign. It was launched earlier this year and it will continue throughout 1989. There have been many critics of the finest new town in the country, which is rapidly becoming the finest town of any kind. The campaign is all about telling people that we are building a fine town and that we want to keep it that way. It deals with litter, graffiti and vandalism. It even teaches dogs to read signs saying that they will be fined £100 should they foul the footpaths.

On a serious note, many hon. Members will be appalled at the amount of litter that is dumped on our streets and at the graffiti that spoils our environment. If any hon. Member can tell me why this is happening, I should be glad to know. From time to time in the House we mention the problems of litter, graffiti and vandalism but then they are forgotten. I am delighted that the Government, led by the Prime Minister earlier this year, are doing all that they can to help the "Keep Britain Tidy" campaign. We are doing our bit in Basildon. Badges and car stickers saying "I love Basildon" have been produced and all sorts of competitions are being held in the town to make people more aware of their environment. I am especially delighted that the schools in the town are entering into the spirit of the campaign, but it is not just young people who are responsible for dumping litter. Time after time when one is stuck on the motorway one sees people winding down their car windows and chucking out tin cans or cigarette ends. Who do they think will pick up that rubbish? Some people may consider that a frivolous point, but I believe it to be important.

There is no finer way of demonstrating our love for our country than by taking more care of and treating our environment with more respect than we do now.

9 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): As the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) talked about love, I was reminded of the epigram of Oscar Wilde: art an illusion, love a myth, and religion a fashionable substitute for belief. I was under the impression that in the modern world love is something that occurs only in soap operas, not in people's real lives. But apparently things are different in Basildon.

It would be a mistake for the House to rise before it had a chance to discuss a report published last week by the Department of Trade and Industry entitled "Summer International plc, formerly Sumrie Clothes plc". It relates to a two-year investigation into the affairs of Mr. Michael Hepker. The report is by Sir Michael Kerry, QC and Keith Carmichael. In effect, the report calls Mr. Hepker a liar and a cheat. It suggests that he was involved in concert parties in relation to share ownership and that he committed a number of offences under the Companies Act 1985. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is in the House of Lords, but one of his junior Ministers should come here and tell us why the Department has said that Mr. Hepker will not be prosecuted. From where does his immunity stem?

The report states:

"In a number of respects we have been given evidence and explanations of events which have, to say the least of it, strained our credulity . . . We have considered reporting to the Court Mr. M. Z. Hepker's failure to provide satisfactory answers to many of our questions."

It said that there is "strong" evidence of breaches of sections 324 and 198 of the Companies Act by Mr. Hepker in that he did not disclose his interest in shares held by Le

Chevalerique and Anglo-European in the company Sumrie Clothes. The report also said that there was evidence of a concert party.

A Minister should come to the House and explain not only why there was no prosecution but why the inspectors made it clear in their report that Ministers at the Department stopped them carrying out their investigation and prevented them from taking it to a proper conclusion. As long ago as 29 July 1987, the inspectors recommended to the Department that the Secretary of State should make an order under section 445 of the 1985 Act that the shares held by Le Chevalerique should be subject to restrictions under part XV of the Companies Act. That means that the shares could not be sold and that no voting rights would attach to them until their ownership had been cleared up. The inspectors recommended that because they believed that Mr. Hepker was prevaricating and not telling them the truth. Amazingly, the Department did not back the inspectors but said, on 19 August 1987, that it would not recommend making such an order because of the likely effect on the company and its employees.

I do not believe that that was the reason why the Department refused to carry out the wishes of the inspectors. It turned down the inspectors' request, first, because of the political embarrassment that it knew that nuisances and investigators like me would cause. I was the one who forced the Department to publish the report after a series of parliamentary questions. The two inspectors have made it clear privately that they do not understand why the report was not published for six months or why the Department refused to allow them to continue their inquiries.

I have been on the inside of the affair from start to finish. I know that the Department has decided that it does not wish to pursue its inquiries to their ultimate conclusion. The inspectors write:

"We have since that date"—

that is, 19 August 1987—

"followed up a number of outstanding leads but are now convinced that under the terms of our appointment there is nothing more which can usefully be achieved. Accordingly we have brought our investigation to a close."

Civil servants and Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry have discovered that it would cost between £160 and £180 an hour to employ someone to pursue their inquiries. Apparently, although the Government are flush with money, they cannot afford that sum to catch City fraudsters. They can afford that money to catch people who defraud the Department of Social Security and to do almost anything else, but, when it comes to someone whom their own inspectors make it clear is a criminal, they are not prepared to pursue the matter.

As long ago as 15 August 1985, I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer under confidential cover, as follows:

"Dear Nigel, For the reasons which will be obvious from letters one to five, I do not think that Mr. Michael Hepker is a fit person to run a public company."

I ended that letter:

"I am slightly puzzled as to why it is that Mr. Hepker is able to break so many of the laws of England and the rules of the Stock Exchange too. Perhaps you could let me know where his immunity comes from."

Three years on, I believe that it is now time for a Minister to come to the House with that report in his hands and say where Mr. Hepker's immunity comes from.

The Department of Trade and Industry has also been told about a company called Meldoak which involves Mr. Hepker. I wrote to the Attorney-General on 15 August, 17 August, 22 August and 3 September 1985 and on 19 January 1986, with copies to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In that case, according to the allegations, all the company's money, £650,000, was stolen by Mr. Hepker.

The south Wales police carried out an investigation and found that there was a prima facie case to answer. The Director of Public Prosecutions saw the papers and found that there was a prima facie case to answer, but he then said that, as the bank account of that United Kingdom company was held in the Isle of Man, the criminal offence had been committed in the Isle of Man and the papers would be passed there. A Minister should come to the House and tell us what help the United Kingdom authorities are giving to the Isle of Man fraud squad. It is traditionally known that the Isle of Man fraud squad is virtually non-existent and that the British police help them in such difficult circumstances. We should be told what the state of play is in this case when there is a prima facie case to answer. Why is there no prosecution?

In 1985—I believe in playing politics long—I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about a case called Supasave in which it was alleged that £1·5 million had been taken by Mr. Hepker. The liquidator who was investigating the offence is still doing so and has no intention of letting the matter go. It was a complicated matter, but, because I am a reasonable man and realised how complicated the money merry-go-round was, I drew a diagram for the Chancellor of the Exchequer so that he could see what was happening as the money moved around the companies. I have in my hand a copy of the original diagram. A Minister should come and tell us what progress has been made in prosecuting Mr. Hepker in that case.

On 2 August 1985, I wrote to Price Waterhouse about some of the affairs of Sumrie Clothes. Some of them have been discussed in the report, but the inspectors say that they were not pertinent to their inquiries. I drew attention to six major affairs where there was prima facie evidence of breaches of the Companies Act 1985. Price Waterhouse has never replied to my letter. I sent a copy of my letter to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. A Minister should come here and tell us the state of play on those six allegations.

The matter simply will not go away. I understand that recently Mr. Michael Hepker was kept under continuous surveillance. I am not going to say who was keeping him under surveillance, but a copy of the report that I have found its way into the hands of *Private Eye*. On Wednesday there will be more revelations about Mr. Michael Hepker which will involve him, the report, Supasave, Meldoak and the breaches of the Companies Act 1985 which I reported to Price Waterhouse. It will also involve other public figures.

I have arranged to meet the editor of *Private Eye* tomorrow to ask him if he will allow me to send this copy of the report to the Department of Trade and Industry. Will the Leader of the House help me? There is no point in my trying to persuade the editor to let me produce the report and give it to the Department of Trade and Industry if Ministers deal with the affair in the way that they dealt with the report produced by the Government's inspectors, the Meldoak case, Supasave and the six facts that I

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referred to Price Waterhouse. If the Leader of the House will tell me that if I can persuade the editor of *Private Eye* to send this valuable document to the Department of Trade and Industry the Department will act on it, I will do that in the public interest.

9.10 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): What I would like to know is, what action do the Government intend to take following the article in *The Observer* on 13 November entitled

"CND men: We sprang spy Blake"?

In that article two former CND activists, Pat Pottle and Michael Randle, are quoted as admitting that they organised the escape from prison in 1966 of the Soviet spy and MI6 traitor, George Blake. Blake had been sentenced to a record 42 years imprisonment by the Lord Chief Justice five years previously in 1961. Many believe that the 42 years represented the number of British agents for whose deaths Blake was responsible.

George Blake seriously undermined the work of Britain's and our allies' security services. He was and remains to this day one of Britain's most notorious traitors. That any British citizens should want to help that man to escape from prison is surprising; that any British citizens would want to admit that they had organised his escape is astonishing, unless they intended to cash in on their activities by publishing a book.

Not only does *The Observer* quote Pat Pottle saying "We did it", but he is quoted as saying:

"We are proud of what we did."

If it is true, that must represent the most appallingly treacherous behaviour. It is unlikely that the two individuals to whom I have referred were simply embarked on a publicity stunt because their names had been implicated previously in the affair by Montgomery Hyde in his biography of Blake in 1987 and *The Sunday Times* has subsequently picked up the story. It is only now, however, that those two individuals have admitted their part in the affair.

The Attorney-General's office has confirmed that a prosecution is not precluded simply because the events occurred 22 years ago. This matter cannot be ignored. If it is, it will give the green light to other criminals to keep their heads down for a number of years and then to try to cash in many years later by publishing a book. An early-day motion signed by 80 of my hon. Friends will appear on tomorrow's Order Paper urging the Government to initiate legal proceedings on the matter. I understand that a prosecution could be forthcoming for contravention of section 39 of the Prison Act 1952 which relates to assisting escape from Her Majesty's prisons.

The participation of two former CND activists in such apparently treacherous activities would tend to give credence to the suspicions held by many of us that some individuals involved in CND are not necessarily arguing their case from a wholly patriotic and British standpoint.

It is particularly interesting that Michael Randle is a lecturer at the school of peace studies at Bradford university. I do not for a moment imagine that the university knew about Mr. Randle's earlier prison-related activities and expertise when he was first employed. However, it raises the interesting point as to how much influence CND has at the Bradford university school of peace studies. Whether peace studies are a suitable subject for academic study and research is an interesting question in itself. I do not intend pursuing that argument now, although Baroness Cox and Professor Scruton have argued forcefully in their book "Peace Studies: A Critical Survey" that peace studies are not a genuine educational discipline.

I question whether the university's school of peace studies approaches its academic work in a wholly objective manner, whether it is deserving of Government funding through the University Grants Committee, or whether—as some of us suspect—it is little more than a production line of anti-Government political propaganda. The peace school is rather good at getting itself into national newspapers. I dug out references to it in the national media in 1987, using the textline facility to which all right hon. and hon. Members have access. It certainly makes interesting reading. April 1987:

"A study published yesterday by Bradford University's school of peace studies has claimed that over 600 neutron bombs are stored in the US, and a similar number of weapons soon to be deployed in Europe may be easily converted into neutron weapons."

May 1987:

"A report published yesterday by Bradford University's school of peace studies claims that cancellation of the Trident missile could save £11·6 billion."

June 1987:

"A report drawn up by the Bradford University school of peace studies alleges that 22 accidents involving nuclear weapons in or around the UK have been concealed by the military authorities."

It is interesting to note the objective justification for that claim:

"The school's report, admitting that it relied on inference and deduction rather than on hard facts, justifies that by citing the Government's own policy of secrecy and the frequency of accidents involving nuclear weapons elsewhere."

I feel sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will agree that that is a very academic way of approaching the subject!

An August 1987 item reported:

"A report published today by Bradford University's school of peace studies has accused the British Government of collaborating with the US to delay or obstruct the Geneva committee on disarmament."

And so they go on. There are a number of references of that kind, but nowhere does one read anything about the Soviet Union—that is, not until November 1987:

"Bradford University's school of peace studies has concluded that the Warsaw Pact may not have overall conventional weapon supremacy. They have concluded that, allowing for the high quality of western equipment, there is a rough parity."

So now we know!

I do not suggest that everything produced by the school lacks intellectual rigour or is politically one-sided—although I understand how someone could reach that conclusion. However, it strikes me as incredible that such a school, based at one of Britain's major universities, has practically nothing to say to the press or in its own publications about the threat posed by the Soviet Union's massive armed forces and those of the Eastern bloc countries. There is little mention of the Soviet Union's numerical superiority of troops, tanks, artillery and aircraft.

More importantly, no mention is made of the nature of the Soviet system, the absence of any legal opposition in that country, the long-cherished Communist ambition of world domination——

Mr. Cryer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Riddick: I am under pressure of time, so I shall not do so, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

The school makes no mention either of the fact that Soviet leaders have been responsible for the deaths of millions of their own citizens, that Russia has taken over so much of Europe by force, and that that Communist country ruthlessly smashed by invasion opposition in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland—in effect, and Afghanistan. In other words, the school says nothing to explain why the West, including Britain, feels that it is necessary to possess nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the Soviet Union's expansionist ambitions.

One looks in vain to the school's prospectus and to its publicationsfor evidence of any balance in its approach. Its publications include titles such as, "As Lambs to the Slaughter: The Facts about Nuclear War," and "Defence Without The Bomb". That was produced by the alternative defence commission set up by the peace school in conjunction with the Lansbury House Trust. By its own admission it is a unilateralist body. The prospectus tells us:

"This is a major initiative concerned with the development of proposals for alternatives to British defence policies which currently rely in whole or in part on nuclear weapons."

Of course, the individuals involved were unilateralists.

The senior lecturer in peace studies at the school has been heard to say that much of the intake of students has come as a result of courses being advertised in "Sanity", CND's magazine. But it was Professor O'Connell, formerly professor of peace studies, who let the cat out of the bag when he told a conference back in 1985:

"The Bradford school of peace studies is not an activist enterprise; it serves instead to provide activists with the academic resources which they need."

Yes, indeed; that is exactly what many of us thought. I should like to know what the Government are doing funding this bogus centre of academic study.

Mr. Cryer: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether, when he began to organise this attack on Bradford university, he approached any Bradford Members for their comments, or whether he submitted any of his comments to any member of the peace studies department for comment? That would at least have been fair.

Mr. Riddick: No, I did not. The issue has come up very recently. Michael Randle, the ex-CND activist, has only recently admitted to having sprung Blake. In the past, however, both Baroness Cox and Professor Scruton carried out detailed examinations of what goes on in the peace studies school. The school itself was not very forthcoming in providing information when it realised that it was under attack.

Bradford university's school of peace studies seems to be a mouthpiece of one-sided unilateralist arguments funded by the taxpayer. The taxpayer should no longer have to bear that burden.

9.22 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I last had the misfortune to follow the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) when he was making a very inept defence of the Economic League. On that occasion he was attempting, in a very amateurish fashion, to defend the indefensible; tonight he has attempted to make an equally ill-researched attack on the Bradford peace studies department.

If the hon. Gentleman knew anything about the department and its work, he would know that it enjoys a national and international reputation among a wide range of individuals for objectivity and independence of view. I suggest that, before he engages in another attack on the department, he attends one of its series of seminars or pays a visit to the department itself, where its members will be only too pleased to inform him about international and national relationships. I certainly hope that, before he launches another such amateurish attack on the department, he will obtain some information about its work.

I wish briefly to draw to the House's attention some matters that Bradford Members have experienced great difficulty in bringing to the House. I refer, of course, to the actions and policies of Bradford's Conservative council. It is only 14 weeks ago that the Conservatives secured political control of the city of Bradford, and it is only nine weeks ago that, at its first full meeting, Bradford council embarked upon a massive cuts package, secured by the mayor's casting vote. We still await the High Court's verdict on whether its action was lawful.

We know that the Conservatives in Bradford have no mandate whatever for the policies upon which they have embarked. There was no election manifesto commitment to the people of Bradford to embark on these policies. No Conservative candidate who has advocated cuts has been elected in any election in Bradford. There is no popular support from the people of Bradford for the cuts package that the Conservatives, under the Conservative leader, Councillor Pickles, have inflicted upon us in recent weeks.

In my view, it is quite wrong that the House of Commons should be prevented from debating these matters and from having them drawn to its attention. The education cuts amount to more than £3 million in the current year, and schools throughout Bradford are very worried about their impact. Head teachers have warned us that they may result in classes having to be increased to 50 children. We have been warned that children may be sent home.

We have also been told that desperately needed repairs are likely to be deferred for years, perhaps indefinitely. Only recently we were told that £18 million needs to be spent upon urgent repairs in Bradford. In the midst of all this, we have heard recently that Bradford is to be the site of a city technology college, sponsored by the Dixon group. We understand that £8 million of taxpayers' money is to be provided to build the CTC.

Mr. Stanley Kalms, the chairman of the Dixon group, who was good enough to meet me recently, confessed that he was anxious to build a CTC in the north. It seemed clear to me from my conversation with him that he was desperate to build a CTC anywhere in the north. It was equally clear that his knowledge of Bradford was just as poor as that of the hon. Member for Colne Valley. He knew nothing about the close relationship that schools in Bradford have had for many years with local business and industry. He certainly knew nothing about the great disappointment that many of my constituents felt when it was announced that the CTC was to be sited on Newby square, which has been used for housing for many years and which, until the middle of October, the local community believed was to be the site of new family-sized housing at low rent and at low cost.

There has been outrage in Bradford at the prospect of a CTC being built on Newby square. People believe that it

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will do great damage to existing schools, particularly the existing upper schools. It is feared that the CTC will undermine the viability of existing sixth forms. Many upper schools fear that many people in Bradford will regard them as ghetto schools where the less able children who cannot gain a place in the CTC have to go.

If Mr. Kalms has £1 million to spend, I urge him to spend it on the existing schools in Bradford. We know that the science laboratories of 11 middle schools are either too small or even unsafe. That would be a very good way for Mr. Kalms to spend his £1 million.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that I wrote to Mr. Kalms and suggested that he should spend some of the money on retaining the remedial teachers whom Bradford, under the Tories, is sacking at the end of this year? They are helping brain-damaged children to learn to read, which is very important. However, Mr. Kalms felt unable to help this very important though rather obscure side of education. Instead, he wants to spend the money of shareholders in the Dixon group on an advertising sign on a college that is to be paid for largely by Bradford ratepayers.

Mr. Madden: That would be another very good way in which available money from Dixon's, or taxpayers' money, could be spent.

I have also asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science for a ballot. Ballots are very popular with Ministers. We seem to be having ballots about everything, yet I have not received a reply, after weeks of the Minister considering my proposals for a ballot, as to whether there should be a CTC in Bradford. The people of Bradford should be allowed to decide how £8 million of their money should be spent. Do they want a CTC or do they want the available funds spent on improving existing schools?

In Bradford, school meal charges were increased to 80p on 7 November. That was an increase of almost 100 per cent. for parents of the youngest children. The number paying for school meals has fallen very sharply. At its peak, 10,000 children who used to pay for school meals were no longer taking them. The latest figure remains very high, at 8,900. I urge Councillor Pickles and the Bradford Conservative council to scrap the school meal price increase, which has done great damage and has resulted in large numbers of children not getting what was their only daily hot meal.

In an open letter Professor Ruth Lister of the department of applied social studies at the university of Bradford, following a meeting with Councillor Pickles, wrote:

"Secondly, I raise the question of the impact of the increase in school meal prices. As you know, it is only children whose families claim income support who now qualify for free school meals. It is officially estimated that about 8,000 children lost the right to free school meals in Bradford this April. For them, in particular, the price increase has been a bitter blow. The family credit is supposed to provide compensation. However, there will be many families who are either not entitled to family credit (including many widows and invalidity pensioners) or not claiming their entitlement nationally, take-up is running at only 30 per cent. of those eligible.

Even for those who are in receipt of family credit the compensation does not meet the cost of a school meal in Bradford for it is currently based on an average school meal price of about 65p. While you have dismissed the difference as 'a few pence' in the local press, those 'few pence' can make a lot of difference to a mother struggling to make ends meet, especially if she has more than one child at school."

I know that from my own experience. One of my constituents is a widow who is 14p above income support entitlement and now has to pay £20 a week for school meals for her five children.

The benefit advice shops in Bradford, Shipley and Keighley are now to close on Friday. We had been warned originally that the closure was likely to take place in March or even as late as April, but it is now to take place on Friday. Even at this late stage, I urge Bradford city council to keep the shops open, so that people who desperately need advice and assistance can receive help on the range of benefits and the other issues that they have taken to the advice shops. Some 60,000 people have made inquiries at those shops in the past three years.

Professor Ruth Lister also writes:

"First, as you know, we are very unhappy about the likely consequences of the closure of the Benefit Shops. I argued tht the suggestion that the Council wished to avoid a duplication of services indicated a misunderstanding of the nature and significance of the kind of work done by the Benefit Shops. The Lord Chancellor himself, in a recent interview, acknowledged that welfare benefits call for a specialised type of information and advice and that they can raise important legal questions. Specialist agencies such as the Benefit Shops therefore play an important role for which the Department of Social Security and the general voluntary sector cannot provide an adequate substitute. The DSS cannot provide independent advice or help with appeals."

That is our experience in Bradford. There are only five Asian-speaking staff in the local DSS offices and there are no Asian-speaking claimant advisers in the unemployment offices. There is only a handful of interpreters and no literature is available from the DSS in any language but English. Therefore, the 28 benefit application forms and advice notes in English are not available in any of the Asian languages. That is important for Bradford.

I urge the Government to persuade Bradford council to keep the shops open, at least until I and other Bradford Members, together with a delegation from Bradford, have attended a meeting to discuss the implications of the closure and to urge that, if the shops are to close, contingency plans be made to appoint extra trained and qualified staff.

There are many other matters to which I could refer. For example, I could have mentioned the closure of the Centrepoint teleshopping lifeline and the way in which millions of pounds have suddenly been found to build private homes on the Lower Grange estate, when only weeks ago we were told that it was impossible for the council to find £300,000 to build new council homes on that estate. Other matters include the refusal of Bradford council, under its new Conservative leadership, to contribute rate money to relieve disasters around the world, including Bangladesh.

The policies and actions of Bradford Conservative council, in the 14 short weeks in which it has been in power, have created outrage and anger, despair and desolation. The churches, the voluntary sector and those who care about children, the elderly and the poor know that the council's policies are making the problems of the poor much worse. The Tories have been able to secure their policies by the casting vote of the mayor. They intend to keep the mayoralty next year: the people of Bradford will have no opportunity to elect new councillors because there will be no elections. Decent Tories in Bradford and

elsewhere are worried and deeply disturbed by the impact of these policies, especially on the poor in Bradford. They know that what Councillor Pickles and his small group of political ideologues are doing is wrong. Ministers must know that it is wrong.

It is high time that Ministers intervened and, albeit privately and quietly, persuaded Bradford council to turn back. That is what I hope will happen as a result of the debate. If it is not forced to turn back, the misery that it is heaping on my constituents and others throughout the district will grow deeper, as will cynicism about the lack of democracy in Bradford.

9.38 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Time is short, but I ask the Minister to consider two urgent questions. First, will he consider the facilities for Iranian business men coming to the United Kingdom? That may seem a strange request, but the Minister will be aware of the huge new market which will provide jobs in Britain from purchases in Iran. Any Government official coming from Iran comes on a service passport. He has to go to a British embassy somewhere and has to wait for a long time. The information then has to go to the Home Office and come back. That can involve long, depressing and humiliating waits.

Almost every other country in Europe has adopted different arrangements. Countries outside the EEC have changed their arrangements because of the unique opportunity. In Germany, Switzerland and Italy no visas are required. In Spain and France no visas are required for service passports. There is an opportunity to make money and to create business. In four new towns Germany has had an opportunity to provide power and sewerage systems and Italy has been involved in four major petrochemical stations. Urgent consideration must be given to the opportunity that we offer people to come here from Iran.

Secondly, I ask the Minister to consider the possibility of a half-hour or hour debate on the egg industry to answer some simple questions. If the Government knew in August, as they said they did, that a serious problem was affecting the health of people and that it was not sensible for them to eat raw eggs, why were there not advertisements in the press and why was not attention drawn to the code of conduct? It would be a tragedy if the Government were regarded as having a two-sided policy for agriculture and the consumer.

9.40 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): This has been an interesting debate and perhaps has covered more subjects than usual. I shall do my best to reply to as many questions as I can.

We have had a busy start to the 1988-89 Session and already the House has given seven Bills a Second Reading. I have no doubt that in the new year we shall be equally busy with further good measures. In the meantime, the dates for the Christmas recess proposed in the motion are generally acceptable, and I commend them to the House.

I wish you, Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, the Officers and staff of the House who serve us a pleasant Christmas and new year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) made some criticism of the fact that the timing of this debate has prevented the Consolidated Fund Bill from starting until 10 o'clock. I recognise his concern, but if we had not spent this afternoon debating the motion we would have had to sit on Friday. When arranging the business for this week, the Government tried to reach a solution acceptable to the House, which I believe we did. My hon. Friend was right to refer to the rights of the minority, which are important, but the majority have rights and it is my task to achieve the most acceptable balance. I shall try not to do the same next time—indeed, I will try not to do the same at any time—but I cannot give an absolute guarantee that it will not happen again in the future. I recognise that it is a shortcoming in the way in which we arrange our affairs if we reduce the amount of time available for Back Benchers.

Understandably, there has been some discussion about eggs and I appreciate the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton. I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the specific points made by my hon. Friend and the important concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), but it is important to put some of the views in their proper context.

The output of the egg industry is worth about £500 million per annum at the farm gate. It provides employment for at least 15,000 people and, in normal circumstances, costs the taxpayer little in support. Unfortunately, there is a problem at present, as the Government and industry accept. The number of outbreaks of food poisoning linked to eggs has increased this year, but the problem must be kept in perspective. The number of reported cases of food poisoning from salmonella linked to eggs is small compared with the huge number of eggs eaten each week—200 million, or about 30 million a day.

When it became clear in the summer that there was a problem, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, together with the Department of Health, immediately started talks with the industry to tackle the problem and to take action at every point in the food production chain. Among other things, that led to the publication of a code of practice. Codes of practice are only a start. The Government are continuing to work on several other matters, including the stringent monitoring of animal protein for animal feed.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food stopped funding research at Bristol because, after an extensive review, it was decided that the research had reached a successful conclusion and the project was ready for industrial support. I repeat that the Government have been taking several actions over a period to tackle the problem of salmonella.

Mr. Dobson: The Ministry thought that the industry was going to support the research but it has not. As a result of the recent crisis it will not be able to support it.

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman heard me correctly, I did not necessarily say that the poultry industry was ready for industrial support, as such. That is the information that I have had, and I believe it to be correct.

[Mr. Wakeham]

However, there is an immediate short-term problem. Uncertainty has caused a sharp decline in egg sales. That has caused acute political and financial difficulties for the industry. In such wholly exceptional circumstances, the Government have decided to introduce two short-term measures, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food this afternoon.

The reduction of the egg laying flock will enable short-term supply and demand to be brought back into better balance. Clearly, it is hoped that measures will be taken quickly to restore order to the egg market, in the interests of the consumer and everybody else in that important sector of the food industry.

Mr. Cryer: Will the right hon. Gentleman advise the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that a section of manufacturing industry has been affected? Twenty-eight jobs in a small firm in my constituency are at stake. That firm has not had an order for two weeks, whereas, in the normal course of events, it would have had seven. Because that firm is as affected as much as anybody else, it deserves consideration as part of the compensation scheme.

Mr. Wakeham: Reference has been made to that point, and I have specifically referred it to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not give way. I shall continue my remarks, as I have many other subjects to deal with.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) raised social security matters. The prime reason for the proposed changes in hostel arrangements is to achieve more sensible arrangements for hostel dwellers within the reformed income support scheme. It is anomalous to have a special scheme for only 25,000 claimants, many of whom live in ordinary houses in the community. However, the Government are anxious to ensure that the reform of payments to hostels should not jeopardise the future of hostels. That is why, on 21 October, we announced that the change should be deferred until after next April to allow more time to consider the effects on hostel finances.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, the Social Security Ministers made clear the need to wait until all the results of the OPCS investigations are available in July 1989 before deciding whether any changes in benefits are required for disabled people. From what the right hon. Gentleman had to say, one would not have thought that Government spending on the disabled had increased by about 90 per cent. since this Government have been in office.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) raised four questions, with which I shall deal quickly. First, he raised the matter of child benefit. He was wrong in what he said because child benefit is included in the order and will be relevant to the debate tomorrow. The arrangements for the debate were approved by a motion in the House on Friday. I recognise his concern about credit, but he also recognised that, although he may be concerned about other methods of credit, housing finance and mortgage commitments are the major factor. The rise in interest rates has already had some effect because it has slowed down mortgage commitments and increased saving.

My right hon. Friend raised two other matters of constituency interest. I remember my days as a candidate in Putney—a long time ago—and the questions which my right hon. Friend raised about the road project are familiar to me. I can say only that there will be a public inquiry, at which his views and those of his constituents will be heard and taken into account. On the West Middlesex University hospital, an approval in principle submission is currently under consideration and a decision will be announced as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) raised two matters. First, he was kind enough to speak about pensions for the Overseas Civil Service and I am grateful to him for what he said. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) that my hon. Friend must take much of the credit for that because he persisted in the matter for a long time. In the end, justice was done.

My hon. Friend also raised the matter of access to this place for Members of the European Parliament. I recognise that matters are not as they should be but, on the general question, I can make progress only with the general agreement of the House that such proposals are the right way forward. I am afraid that a number of hon. Members—a few Conservative Members as well as Opposition Members—are unhappy with the proposals about access. I have done my best and I should like to see better arrangements. Like my hon. Friend, I deplore the low turnout in the election in Hampshire, Central. Of the 14 per cent. who voted, two of the voters were my wife and I. That did not make a substantial difference to the turnout.

I must tell my hon. Friend that I hear few complaints from Members of the European Parliament about access to the Government and to Ministers. I believe that they feel that they receive a fair hearing from Ministers and that they are able to put to them the points in which they are interested.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) raised the question of Crown post offices and sub-post offices, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton. The Post Office is currently considering the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report into the activities of Post Office Counters Ltd. The Government will publish the Post Office's response to the report when consideration has been completed, and I understand that that will be soon. With my hon. Friend I regret that industrial action has been taken by counter staff, especially as it has been in advance of the Post Office's response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report. My hon. Friend is right to say that good industrial relations in the Post Office are of vital importance.

I shall now deal with the matter of school visits. The restrictions on charges do not prevent a local education authority or a school from seeking voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or in support of any school activity. If activities are worthwhile, surely parents are willing to contribute to the cost. Local education authorities and schools will have discretion, as before, to help in hardship cases.

I shall now deal with the matter of Barlow Clowes. The parliamentary ombudsman's inquiries are at an early

stage. It is a complicated case and, at present, the time scale for the inquiry is not known. The Department of Trade and Industry is, of course, co-operating fully.

I understand my hon. Friend's impatience about the queues outside the public entrance to the House of Commons. As he knows, this matter is being considered urgently by the Administration and Accommodation Sub-Committee, and I hope that we shall make progress on it early in the new year.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) asked about the future of Harland and Wolff and of Shorts. The Government are aware of the concern about the future ownership of Harland and Wolff, but public ownership has not provided security of employment. The company will survive only if it is competitive, and that is best achieved by applying the disciplines of the private sector. Those are the main reasons why we have decided to privatise Harland and Wolff.

Interest in acquiring the company continues to be shown by two private sector buyers and the possibility of a management-employee buy-out is also being discussed. We regret that we were unable to reach agreement with Mr. Tikkoo over his acquisition of the company and the building of the Ultimate Dream cruise liner. Details of the negotiations must of course remain confidential to the interested parties.

The Government believe that the early return of Shorts to the private sector offers the best prospect for its future. A substantial number of companies have expressed interest and any proposal which would establish the company on a sound financial basis in the private sector would be carefully considered by the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) referred to the possible dangers of car telephones. I am pleased to be able to tell him that no further legislation is necessary to deal with the problem. Under the Road Traffic Act 1972, drivers are liable for prosecution for driving without undue care and attention. I understand that the use of hands-off equipment is recommended by the Department of Transport and that when the highway code is rewritten to take account of the North report next year that recommendation will be included.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) raised the important question of remand prisoners kept in police cells. I have a feeling that he raised that matter some months ago, but it is an important subject and he is right to come back to it. He cited the figure for 31 October. Some time before that the problem was even worse. At one time, more than 2,000 prisoners were kept in police cells while on remand. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that there has been a substantial fall in the number, and the Government have been tackling the problem with great urgency. I had the figure checked while the hon. Gentleman was speaking and I am informed that today the figure is down to 440, which is a substantial improvement. It is expected to fall still further before Christmas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) raised three questions of love, as he put it, and they were all interesting in their way. The first concerned the imposition of VAT on hospital broadcasting equipment. I guess that most of us have taken part in hospital broadcasts, and I share my hon. Friend's admiration for the volunteers who spend much of their time providing entertainment and information for those in hospital. It is difficult, however, to pick out one worthy cause from a host of worthwhile causes. General relief would be very expensive and—although this argument may not appeal to my hon. Friend—contrary to the arrangements laid down by the European Community.

I agree with my hon. Friend about litter and the environment. He is absolutely right to stress the importance of all local initiatives. Preventing litter is one way in which individual citizens can actively improve their environment, and we should all seek to encourage that.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) asked questions which I cannot answer, but I shall refer his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) raised important matters, but prosecutions are for the Attorney-General, not for me. I shall certainly refer his remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) gave his analysis of the position in Bradford. He sounded alarmist and seemed to ignore many of the relevant factors concerned with education.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 22nd December, do adjourn until Tuesday 10th January.

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Transport (London)

10.1 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise the subject of transport in London. I am particularly delighted that I have been lucky in the draw and that the debate has come at this time of the evening. Perhaps my colleagues will agree with that, not least my hon. Friend the Minister who is to reply. We have been mercifully treated in that, particularly as, had I been less lucky, we might have found ourselves trying to get home in the early hours of the rush hour tomorrow morning. That would have stressed the problems that we address in this debate.

When I first applied for this debate, road transport was uppermost in my mind, particularly the chaos caused by a variety of incidents and accidents and the standstill that affected our city centre on at least three occasions. Since then, sadly, the train crash in Battersea, outside Clapham junction station, has dominated our thoughts on transport in London. I hope that we can set on one side the details of that incident, because we want to avoid snap judgments on a terrible tragedy of that magnitude.

For example, soon after the crash, we had discussions on the design of the coaches of the train involved. At first it appeared that they were an old design which ran regularly on that line and we seemed to have an answer to the problem. It seemed that all we needed to do was to change the style of the coaches and all would be well. But subsequently we discovered that that coach was only on that line that day because of vandalism at Poole. Vandals had put a cement mixer on the line and prevented the more modern train from passing to Bournemouth, so the older train had come out of store so, let us not jump to conclusions tonight, but wait for the public inquiry.

Certain thoughts must come from that incident and there have been many thoughts on the number of passengers travelling on trains into central London. In shorthand, it is called overcrowding, but that is a difficult term to define. Crowding seems bad enough, so I am not sure what overcrowding is. Thereby hangs another debate —on the numbers that should be standing in excess of the number of seats.

What is clear is that, while there are rules on the number of passengers in excess of seats that can travel on long-distance journeys into London or elsewhere, for journeys of fewer than 20 miles such rules do not apply. Most of the trains that cover my and other inner-London constituencies travel fewer than 20 miles and so are not covered. Those trains are jam-packed with people travelling over the same lines on which the accident took place and along the same network of signals.

We must look carefully at the number of people travelling on trains. I believe that the first lesson we must learn is that we need not so much more trains—I doubt whether the timetable could accommodate them—as longer ones. However, in many of our suburban stations longer trains will mean that longer platforms are needed, which I hope will be considered.

However, that accident has caused us to look at the safety record of the railways in London. That record is quite remarkable; it is a tribute to the management of and those working for British Rail. We have the busiest junction in the country, perhaps in the world, through which 2,000 trains travel per day, carrying more than 350,000 passengers—at peak times, 1,000 passengers a minute travel into London—yet when I asked people in the Battersea area when an accident last caused loss of life, they could not remember. The last time they could remember casualties in that part of London was when bombs dropped out of the sky over London. Such a record is a tribute to the staff. There have been few severe rail accidents in London. I believe that there have been two others this decade, each with three dead, and then one goes back to Hither Green in the 1960s and Lewisham in the 1950s. One has to look way beyond the last war to find anything that has affected this busy area of London. It is a safe track, which must be reassuring.

The message that I hope to bring to this debate is that, in solving our transport difficulties in London, we must look much more seriously at public transport. We must encourage many more people to use it, which must mean more people using the railways. Of course we need safer railways, and that will come out of the inquiry, but we need a better service to attract people to them. We have a service which is good in parts and improving in parts. We know that in some cases there is a need for staffing, rolling stock and platforms, which I have already mentioned.

I believe that we need, too, new and reopened lines. Snow Hill is perhaps a good example of old railway being brought back into use, and I would like to see others reopened. I think in particular of the west London line. The old Battersea station was not reopened after the war and is still there in embryo over Battersea High street. That line could serve an area of London which is not served by rail or Underground. It could travel across the Thames to Chelsea harbour, another area deserted by public transport. Most important of all, it could go up through West Brompton to Earl's Court and provide, at long last, an underground link from the busiest junction on British Rail—Clapham junction—to Earl's Court. I hope that my hon. Friend will look carefully at that suggestion.

I hope that in studying the road plans in that area, especially the WEIR—the western environmental improvement route—the Minister will ensure that any such plans do not cut off the options for that rail and tube link at West Brompton. I am sure, too, that there will be general agreement that the Chelsea-Hackney link, which has long been a priority of hon. Members and of transport managers in London, should be given the go-ahead.

I believe that British Rail has received more investment cash this decade than in any other in its history. That is

good news, but it is still not sufficient. We need still more resources if we are to continue the shift from road traffic to rail.

There are three ways in which to encourage road users to abandon their vehicles and to use trains. The first, of course, is to allow roads to grind to a halt. Drivers would have no option but to leave their cars and walk or find public transport. The second is to price cars off the road. The third option is to make rail travel more attractive in terms of speed, comfort and price.

The first option, of allowing our roads to grind to a halt, is totally unacceptable. One has only to consider the impact on the emergency vehicles and remember the recent example of those vehicles trying to get to King's Cross and Clapham Junction. One can only price cars off the road if the third option is operative. That third option must take the lead in our policies to cure London's problems. We must have more funds, better used, to provide a better rail service.

Cash is required for all forms of transport—I do not just mean taxpayers' cash, but investment cash in the broadest sense. I do not believe that one should pluck figures out of the air and say that, within the next five years, £2 billion, £5 billion or £10 billion must be spent. That is the wrong way in which to consider the problem. We must accept that London is seizing up and that it needs investment cash.

In recent years we have had a good record of investment, but the current rate of investment is leading not to any improvements in London's transport, but to a standstill position; all too often, that literally means that London's traffic comes to a standstill. That is not good enough. We must have a shopping list of major and minor projects so that people can live and work in London. Once we have that shopping list, we can decide those we must afford to fund, those to which we can ask the private sector to contribute and those that we can suggest that transport passengers fund, if they are prepared to pay the price. We should use all three avenues to achieve the necessary investment.

I believe that we need co-ordination to achieve the improvements we seek. Too often we consider road and rail transport separately. When reaching conclusions on schemes for either branch of our transport system, we often do not consider whether they will work in conjunction with the other branch.

The last thing we need is another example of the Greater London council approach: after 10 years, it produced the central plan, which it then took three years to abandon. We need greater co-ordination, which must come from the Department and its Ministers.

Does my hon. Friend believe that it is sensible to continue to have a Minister with responsibility for roads and a Minister with responsibility for railways? Is it sensible to continue to have that symbolic divide within the Department? That divide is often reflected outside. We need to find better ways in which to divide responsibilities within the Department. That is a tentative suggestion, because I know that it is my hon. Friend's boss, the Secretary of State, whose task it is to work on that.

One way in which we could improve things is to have a Minister for London or a Minister whose responsibilities included London. We should consider whether that means London as it is or whether the area within the M25 should be part of the London transport scene.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What about the GLC?

Mr. Bowis: That Minister would be able to bring together the planners for the roads, the railways and the Underground and those responsible for the river and air transport to consider the problems. Recently we had a problem in Battersea when a barge bashed into Battersea bridge. That had a great effect on traffic. When I asked in a parliamentary question the effect that that accident had on traffic flows, I was told that it was the responsibility of the boroughs. That is fine, but Wandsworth happens to be responsible for Battersea bridge, and Kensington and Chelsea is responsible for the Albert bridge. No one has the figures for the effect on various bridges down the river, or a co-ordinated policy to operate if, for example, we needed urgently to bring in the Royal Engineers to put across a temporary bridge.

This co-ordinating role is an important necessity. I hope that the river will receive greater prominence in future planning. There is enormous scope for more riverbus traffic. I hope that such planning will include building piers in suitable places, such as the heliport, to take some traffic off the roads.

I hope that my constituents will not be the only ones to suffer—or benefit—from a heliport. There used to be two of them in London—it is time there were two, or even three, again. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the City of London that it is time it did its bit to provide a heliport service——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my hon. Friend aware that if there is a heliport it is likely that helicopters will fly from it, and that many people find the noise of helicopters a severe irritant and want fewer, not more, helicopters and few and smaller heliports?

Mr. Bowis: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's worries. That is one reason why I want to spread the load a little, so that not so many flights fly over our end of London and flights can be spread down the river to the east of London. We have a City airport—why not allow helicopters to fly there, too?

Helicopters and riverbuses will provide only some answers to our problems. A great many more people travel on the Underground. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of passengers travelling on it in recent years. That increase, good as it was, will be reversed if we cannot improve the service.

On the eastern border of my constituency—there is no other Underground service in it—is a branch of the Northern line. Numbers of my constituents are served by the stations at Clapham Common, Clapham South and Balham. Those three stations give rise to more than a little of the volume of my mailbag. My constituents refer to a black hole down which trains rarely come. If they come, they tend to be full; while people wait for them they tend to be mugged. If they manage to get on, they tend to get mugged again. While they are on the trains they may get tipped out halfway down the line, because the trains go no further.

I exaggerate a little, but for a purpose. I know that LRT is making enormous efforts to cure the crime and frequency problems of the Northern line, but it is always in the news and it has always been seen as a bad line—yet it is never at the top of the priority list. The line needs staff, rolling stock and station redevelopment, and it needs to be

[Mr. Bowis]

split in two—and it should be put at the top of the priority list. If that requires private investment, let us pioneer that in the Underground system. Let us put the line out to tender and see whether private enterprise can do what so far public management has not been able to.

In public transport of all sorts, but particularly on the Underground, there is often a problem of staff shortages because of the difficulty of housing at the ends of the line, which tend to be in more expensive areas. We should encourage the railway authorities to provide some sort of housing for their staff. I do not mean the old tied cottage sort of housing. Railwaymen and Underground staff want to own their homes these days like everyone else. The railway authorities should, by themselves or together with housing associations, provide share purchase schemes to enable railway staff—particularly young couples—to start down the line in the housing market.

There need to be more car parks at the outer stations, which people should be encouraged to use.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point about housing, but how does he think the London borough of Wandsworth would react to his suggestion, bearing in mind the enormous housing problems there? More than 1,000 houses are empty, waiting to be sold not to local people but to anyone with money. Unfortunately, rail staff do not live in the area and have no commitment to it.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is a need for housing for such people. I am sure that Wandsworth council would welcome the scheme that I mentioned, just as it welcomed a similar scheme proposed by Wandsworth health authority to enable its staff to buy their own homes. Housing associations have been involved in such schemes. The public sector need not be involved.

I shall not dwell, because others may, on the options for further development of the Underground, especially the deep central figure of eight line, as it is described, and the private investment that could be waiting to assist in such a project.

From a recent answer by my hon. Friend the Minister, we know that there has been a marginal slowing down of traffic as it enters London in the rush hour. As he rightly said, the figure is not much different from that of 50 years ago, but there has been a move downwards in recent years. Of course, at times the slowdown becomes a full stop. We have heard interesting ideas about building deep tunnels —perhaps with private capital—to solve our road problems. I say firmly to my hon. Friend that we do not need inner link roads carving a way through the best of our housing and through the green spaces and commons of inner London. We should treasure and protect them. The Department should turn down some of the dottier consultants' schemes as soon as possible so that there is no planning blight, which such proposals have caused in the past.

My hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt say that we have traffic problems and that they must be solved. We cannot put all the traffic on to rail. We must have good routes so that buses, taxis and bicycles, as well as the cars and commercial vehicles that need to reach the centre of the city, can travel in inner and central London. Surveys show that, although there is much traffic moving round the inner ring, it is mainly local traffic from one borough to the next. The main problem occurs when that traffic comes up against the traffic trying to get out of London. If the Department considered decommissioning the south circular road, that would help everyone's state of mind.

We need to build roads that go right out of London, and we must consider radical solutions. We should consider tunnelling by deep boring rather than the cut and cover technique, because the former is much more acceptable. Where there is land alongside the railway lines that go out towards the M25, let us use that. Where there is no land, let us build on top of the railway lines. If it is feasible to build a new six-lane motorway above the M25, it must be possible to put roads above our railways. At least that would solve the falling leaves problem in the autumn. We should allow the private sector to put money into such schemes and to charge tolls. I am sure that people would pay to use fast roads in and out of London. That would take traffic off the minor roads of my borough and others in inner London.

Local solutions, including road straightening, road widening, traffic light improvements and better traffic light co-ordination, could help enormously. I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend and his Department have done with Wandsworth council. Schemes such as that at Swandon way have made an important contribution to improving the area. But there are still problems in that area, because, although Swandon way has been a great help to traffic travelling west, going east we have the south circular road, Wandsworth road, Battersea Park road, Lombard road from Battersea bridge and Wandsworth bridge roundabout, all those routes funnel into Wandsworth high street and then try to get up West hill, where the road has only one lane each way. Such problems still need to be tackled in west London.

We welcome the measures involving new technology in the Road Traffic Driver Licensing and Information Systems Bill introduced in another place to enable drivers to dodge bottlenecks. Bottlenecks are not always caused by the annoyances that we expect. They are not always caused by broken-down cars, burst water mains, gas leaks or even the antics of the National Union of Students. More often than not the cause is thoughtless, illegal parking on single and double yellow lines on through roads. Too many of our fellow motorists see the single yellow line as a nuisance and the double yellow line as a bloody cheek. We must now say to such drivers, "Enough is enough. You cannot go on blocking London or bringing the city to a halt. You cannot choke our roads."

I should favour the introduction of a red line system on through routes, involving the instant payment of a £200 fine. That would apply to the rush hour and would deter even those people whose fines are paid by their employers. If necessary, I hope that we could make it illegal for employers to pay their employees' fines.

I welcome the continuing efforts that many London boroughs have made, particularly to enable cyclists to travel as safely and as pollution-free as possible through inner London. My final plea, however, is for the disabled who are too often ignored in transport planning in London. I think particularly of route planning, vehicle and rolling stock design and access to railway stations—for example, at Clapham junction with its many staircases and gaps between the platform and the train. We should pay much attention to such points.

I think also of the excellent dial-a-ride scheme, although that is rather inflexible because users' needs sometimes come second to the administrative neatness preferred by London Regional Transport. I understand its desire for neatness, but it should also be flexible. In my area, people can benefit from longer journeys on the dial-a-ride scheme for medical reasons or to go into the west end. A single journey is often worth more than a shorter journey. One long journey to a relative may be worth six visits to a local bingo hall.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to continue his resistance to the European Community straitjacket into which it is trying to put voluntary drivers for the disabled. This morning, I attended my local Golden Age club where a bus was handed over to enable members to get around the borough. Sadly, if the new EEC scheme comes into force, they will have difficulty finding a driver equipped to take them round.

London is a densely populated city and provides jobs for many people who live beyond its boundaries. Its economic growth is creating new jobs, and many firms are looking well beyond London for staff. In a recent article, Professor Buchan said:

"Traffic is mostly the product of what goes on in buildings."

That is right. The result of building in London is ever greater demands on transport. Historically, our railways and Underground system had to be built where they could be built. Houses have been built alongside and we cannot therefore build new lines alongside. Our roads were built not for modern vehicles or the present volume of cars, but for the slow-moving, narrow-gauge horse and cart. We must introduce schemes for modern transport in the capital.

Many surface improvements could be made and I have alluded to many of the options. Ultimately, to coin a phrase, the answer lies in the soil. We should be digging deep to look for solutions. We should be tunnelling our way out of this transport prison. I come from a borough that incorporates part of Wimbledon common, and if we dig deep we may, to quote the Wombles song, have an "Underground, overground, travelling", well, if not "free", at least one on which we can travel safely, swiftly, in comfort and at a price that we and our environment can afford.

10.30 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): It is always nice to hear of someone who sees the light on the road to Damascus. We have just heard from someone who has seen the light on the road to Clapham junction. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) urged greater investment in public transport and its greater use. However, I must remind the hon. Member that he is talking to a Government who have continually decimated the public service grant to the extent that there has been a 40 per cent. cuts in grant. The Government have also abolished the only effective transport authority for London, the Greater London council, and they are determined to break up London Regional Transport.

I agree with the hon. Member for Battersea, as would most people, that our roads are antiquated, that our transport system was designed for the horse and cart and that we now have to live with the car. The same could be said of almost every other capital city. In comparison to other transport systems, we have failed in many respects.

I believe that there should be five principles for transport in London. The first is the freedom to move about London quickly to work, for shopping or for leisure without the need to use the car or spend a fortune. The first principle is good, cheap and effective public transport.

Secondly, I want the freedom to move out of London quickly and efficiently without a car. That means ready access by rail or coach to airports or seaports.

Thirdly, I want people to have the freedom and to enjoy the pleasure of moving around on their own two feet, on one foot or, if one is completely disabled, on no feet. There should be pedestrian areas where people can enjoy moving around in a segregated area. It is an absolute disgrace that we have not pedestrianised Oxford street, Shaftesbury avenue, Regent street and other areas of London. I accept that part of Clapham junction has been pedestrianised along St. John's road. However, in comparison with other major European cities, it is outrageous that London has so few areas designated for the freedom of the pedestrian or for people in wheelchairs. There should be more pedestrianisation, and we should strike the right balance between one's ability to use a car and the ability to use one's feet.

Fourthly, we should have the freedom to move around London by cycle because that is one of the healthiest and least polluting ways of moving around any city. The more we can encourage the use of the bicycle, the better.

Finally, we should have the freedom within the constraints imposed by pedestrianisation and over-crowding to enjoy using our cars. I am not being hypocritical about this. The ability to use a hypermarket with a large parking area represents an immense increase in the freedom of people to use their city. It increases convenience and often produces a big decrease in their cost of living. We must not neglect the car.

Over 50 years in London we have witnessed the inability or unwillingness to make bold decisions about transport or bold investments in transport. There has been too much whining and parochialism and not enough courage. There is evidence of that even today. It is no use arguing for 50 years that traffic should be shifted off the roads and on to rail and then, when we have the opportunity to gain access to a rail network serving the rest of Europe and even Asia, to whine about the possibility of our having to improve domestic access to that network.

We must have more courage and put aside our cowardice about bold transport systems, provided of course that there is proper compensation and that such development is sensibly approached and not bulldozed through. We must be bold from time to time. Having argued for 50 years that rail must take more traffic, we must not run away from that prospect the moment it means adding an extra platform to our local railway station. I hope that we shall be bolder and more courageous in tackling London's transport system.

We have suffered also from undue restrictions. It is outrageous that our major fruit and vegetable market, new Covent Garden, on the edge of my borough, is not served by water access. Many of us understand the reason—restrictions on use of the river. But again that is outrageous, and it is an enormous waste of a potential transport facility.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does my hon. Friend recall that, at the public inquiry into that scheme,

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

its promoters promised river access, and that there was the prospect of rail access as well? That was discussed during the debate on the Covent Garden Market (Financial Provisions) Bill 1977, when my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) and I nearly divided the House. Nevertheless, the property developers—or someone—reneged on both undertakings.

Mr. Fraser: I am sure that that is so. I regret that lack of foresight——

Mr. Spearing: Such a facility was foreseen, but it was reneged on.

Mr. Fraser: My hon. Friend makes his point.

In the past, London docks were destroyed by the inability of heavy lorries to reach the dockside. That is one reason why so much employment in central London was lost. About 20 years ago, it took three days to get a lorry carrying an export order from Barker and Dobson's factory in Clapham to the London docks. The docks were moved elsewhere because of the essential need for proper road communications.

Underground construction since the end of the last war has been pathetic. There was an immense general building programme, but in the past 50 years we have seen only the building of the Victoria line as far as Brixton—and it cannot go further because it is grossly overcrowded to the point of danger—and that of the Jubilee line. Compared with the massive programme of underground construction that was undertaken in the 1920s and 1930s, there has been gross neglect of investing in the system.

There should be duplication of the Northern line and of the Victoria line. Lines should be constructed to destinations such as Crystal Palace and beyond the Elephant and Castle, where the land has been reserved for the last 50 years, to Camberwell green. There should also be an underground link to Lewisham, perhaps using the misnamed east London line—really it is the south-east London line

There should also be an end to the extremely dangerous overcrowding. I am reminded of a Spike Milligan poem:

"A little sardine saw a submarine
And took a look through the peephole.
'Come, come, come', said the sardine's mum,
It's only a tin for the people."

One can say exactly the same of any sardine seeing a train on the Northern line.

I want to see massive investment in London's transport system, together with a substantial increase in pedestrianisation—achieved with the right balance between that and one's necessary and pleasurable use of the car. Our present choice is the choice between the cattle truck and the stampede. We must have a better London transport system. Without it we shall have a system that does not work at all.

10.39 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said that it was essential to have swift access to the Channel tunnel, and that people should not whine if their properties were affected because full compensation should have been paid. Alas, three of the four proposed routes from London to the Channel tunnel touch my constituency, and—as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware—there is considerable apprehension about the building of new lines. The Clapham junction railway tragedy, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) referred in so ably opening the debate, has reawakened the alarm of those who fear the mixing of high-speed trains from the continent with existing suburban lines, and we must give much more thought to that problem.

It is always pleasant to be able to say "I told you so". In our debates on the abolition of the Greater London council, while I broadly supported the Government in their abolition of that elephantine body, I said that successor bodies would be necessary to co-ordinate traffic in London. The same point was made forcefully in a leading article in *The Times* the other day, after a notable series of articles on traffic problems in London:

"For the organization of London's transport to be improved does not require the Greater London Council to be reconstituted".

What was needed, said the article, was a new executive with

"both operational independence from the vested interests in the Department of Transport and powers to require British Rail and London Regional Transport to co-ordinate their plans and function in co-operation . . . A new London Transport Executive could go a long way in relieving the police of responsibility for traffic control and reinvigorating the warden service. Most important, it could standardize policy on parking and penalties across the capital."

We desperately need a new transport executive in London, and co-ordination is needed in particular to deal with obstruction, traffic choke points and parking. The main obstruction offenders are the statutory authorities which dig up roads, and builders who block highways while carrying out construction work. Of course the telephone, gas and water authorities must have the right to dig up the roads to carry out repairs, but I believe that they should have to pay for that right, and that the payments should be sufficiently graded for every pressure to be put on those who dig up the roads to return them to operation as quickly as they can by working night and day.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said that in years to come, possibly by the beginning of the next century, the expenditure of hundreds of millions of pounds will provide us with a great new computer-controlled electronic warning system that will tell bus and other drivers about obstructions ahead and divert them around those obstructions. With a little thought and organisation and the expenditure of tens of thousands of pounds rather than tens of millions of pounds, and the provision of a few quickly-produced signs, I think that we could have a warning system now.

Twice during the past month when parking near Hanger Lane I have been caught in horrendous traffic jams at normally slack periods during the weekend because the authorities had closed two of the three lanes without providing any warning signs. When I drove back to London on Sunday I could have got into exactly the same sort of jam in exactly the same place, but because I was listening to LBC I heard a traffic warning that again the three lanes had been reduced to one. No attempt had been made, however, by the authorities to provide warning signs on the roads coming into London which would have enabled drivers to take alternative routes and avoid the traffic jam. I believe that an adequate warning of road works could be provided now and that the new traffic

executive should be responsible for traffic signposting. Sadly, south London has the worst traffic signposting in any major European city.

A number of traffic checkpoints in London have been made a great deal worse because local councils have closed side streets, thus forcing more traffic on to main roads. During the past few weeks my regular route to my constituency from the Palace of Westminster has been made virtually impassable by the action of the local borough council. I have been pushed back on to a main traffic artery. I am wholly in favour of protecting quiet back streets, but that can be done by the use of sleeping policemen and road humps that slow down traffic without completely closing streets to traffic. Kensington and Chelsea council has adopted a very enlightened attitude towards road humps. I urge the Under-Secretary of State to keep the road hump regulations under regular review and to encourage their wider use. London needs a central traffic executive to override the powers of local councils that want to close side streets.

London desperately needs a sensible parking policy. Traffic flows and road safety would be enormously improved if illegal parking near street corners could be stopped. It would be difficult to stamp it out completely, but if people who parked illegally at street corners had to pay a fine that was two or three times greater than the normal parking fine, I believe that this practice, which hinders traffic flows and endangers road safety, could be reduced.

The central traffic authority should have direct control over some traffic wardens so that traffic choke points such as the notorious junction of Kensington High street and Kensington Church street could be patrolled regularly and any vehicle that stopped there would be given a parking ticket immediately. The central traffic executive should also be responsible for encouraging the provision of more off-street parking. We need greater subsidies for underground car parking in some of our London squares. In the House, we benefit from one of the best underground car parks in the world, and the central traffic executive should encourage the wider use of off-street parking places.

Before the war Mussolini gained great praise because it was alleged that he made the trains run on time. I believe that enormous dividends can be gained by any politician who can solve London's traffic problems.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be helpful for hon. Members to know that the Front Bench speeches will begin at 11.10 pm. It is a very short debate. I suggest that five-minute speeches will enable many hon. Members to be called.

10.51 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Popular): I have spoken many times about the lack of overall planning required to improve public transport in my constituency, particularly in view of the enormous developments in Docklands. The building of the Docklands highway will encourage cars to come into the area and choke it up if public transport is not massively increased. However, that is not the subject on which I wish to speak tonight.

I wish to speak about a subject which many women in my constituency and many of their fathers, partners and sons would like me to raise—the safety of women on public transport in London. Only 35 per cent. of women in London hold driving licences—half as many as men. "Women's Transport News" researched the matter and found that only 60 per cent. of those with driving licences have access to a car and 70 per cent. are always dependent on public transport and lifts. "Ask any Woman"—based on a research project in London by an organisation called Women Against Rape—showed that 80 per cent. of women in London do not have their own cars. Some have motorbikes, but two thirds of them have no access to any motorised transport. Another source, Pensioners' Link, showed that only one in 10 women over 65 drives a car. Transport Today showed men and women from black and ethnic minorities groups use public transport about 50 per cent. more than white people.

It is quite clear that women have much less access to cars and have far greater need than men for public transport, and that black women need public transport even more than white women. It is extremely important to all women to be able to travel safely.

Unfortunately, on or waiting for public transport is one of the most common places for women to be attacked. Another danger is when women accept lifts from semi-strangers. Possibly young women who have been to a party and who have missed the last bus or face a long wait at bus stops or a long walk to the tube in the dark feel that accepting a lift is the lesser evil, and that decision often leads to an attack. Sometimes young women hitch-hike or accept lifts due to lack of money. That is all too common, given the present level of unemployment.

"Ask any Woman" found that three quarters of women felt uneasy, frightened or very frightened or never went out after dark. Women of all ages have said to me that they never go out after dark. That affects their social lives and their choice of jobs and job opportunities.

Women fear different categories of London public transport. British Rail closed-compartment trains are feared most by women, followed by the Underground. Women say that if they are attacked on an Underground train they cannot get off until the train stops. After getting off, one is in a maze and cannot see round corners. One has to run up the stairs and there is no one to go to for help. It can be a nightmare. Seventy per cent. of all women think that it is unsafe to use British Rail or the Underground or to wait at a bus stop at night.

Winvisible and other disability organisations say that disabled women are particularly vulnerable. If one cannot see, hear or run well and has to ask for physical assistance from people who may take advantage, one is particularly vulnerable and may be singled out for attack. That applies also to older women, pregnant women and women with young children who cannot move fast.

Another danger is one-person-operated doors. Again, that is particularly dangerous for older people, pregnant women and women with small children. Last year there were 300 officially recorded incidents involving people trapped in the centre doors of buses in London. At least three people have died. If I had more time, I could supply many quotations from people saying that they fear those doors and one-person-operated buses.

Transport cuts are harming women in particular since they use public transport most. Eighty per cent. of women interviewed by the GLC women's committee said that they wanted bus conductors and station staffing. I am disappointed that the Docklands light railway in my constituency has no staff at stations. The cuts in bus routes mean longer waits at dark bus stops and more

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

hitch-hiking. Every cut in services means that more women are attacked. The same applies to rises in fares. Fares for women are disproportionately higher because women do more short journeys.

Many factors make women feel unsafe. For example, women are frightened by empty platforms and carriages, standing alone at bus stops, not seeing round corners in subways, being unsure of where to go, knowing that no help is at hand in case of trouble, having to wait a long time, and long corridors in subways resulting from the bad design of stations.

Many positive measures can be taken but they all cost money. Money must be spent so that women are not trapped in their homes and can live full and proper lives. Money should be spent on good lighting and visibility. We should reduce the circumstances which result in women having to wait. That means frequent train and bus services. There should be visual display units, radios, alarm systems, good indication of when trains are coming, better positioning of bus stops, improvements in the signposting on the Underground, more exits on the Underground to reduce the distance that women have to walk and rationalisation of passageways. There should also be an absence of provocative advertising and the removal of sexist, racist and violent graffiti immediately. Above all, there should be adequate, well-trained staff to observe, advise and assist passengers.

10.58 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The House is agreed that there should be more co-ordination. There used to be. When the GLC was formed it had overall responsibility for strategic planning. Whatever one thought of the members—I was a member of the planning and traffic committee for some years—there was a skilled and professional team at work. That team has been broken up and does not appear to be in the Department of the Environment or the Department of Transport. That is to be deplored.

There have been major strategic errors. For example, 50,000 people are working at the Canary Wharf development without there having been a public inquiry or a proper planning application. That is a sin of commission. Proposals for the Channel tunnel must be decided by British Rail, but there should be an inquiry before a decision is taken and a Bill is brought before the House. There has been no strategic planning, for which Conservative Members have been asking.

In the early 1980s, Sir Peter Parker suggested an imaginative cross-rail plan for London to the Department of Transport but received no response, probably because it would not pay for itself. If it had been accepted, it would have been built by now and would have forestalled the present overcrowding.

Of course there is overcrowding, but much of it is due to Government policies. There has been investment in new stock, but railway staff say that for every four coaches taken out of service only three are being replaced. A driver writing in *Modern Railways* in September 1988 said:

"Something unheard of is now arising—drivers resigning . . . July sees the cancellation of over 100 trains on Southern Region due to staff shortage."

Overcrowding is often a result of cancelled trains or trains that are too short because of an insufficiency of coaches. Financial pressure on British Rail management, especially on Southern region, is unrealistic, and there is a lack of cushions in the performances being demanded of it. The east Putney up-spur, which is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), was electrified in 1915 but has now been lifted. Such nonsense must stop.

A problem in my constituency illustrates the Government's approach to transport in London. London Buses is being broken into 15 different firms. Pressure on staff to work harder for lower wages is a controversial subject. There was an unofficial strike at West Ham garage about three weeks ago because the men were being asked to work longer hours and cover more mileage for the same pay. They were not too worried about pay because it had been agreed in negotiations, but they were worried about passenger safety and the fact that they were becoming too tired to give a proper service, especially with London's congestion. That occurred because of the Government's policy to break London Buses into 15 different firms, with conditions of service that worry the staff very much. The safety issue arose directly from the Government's pressure for less public money to be spent on public transport in London.

I hope that the Fennell report will be debated in the not too distant future, so I will leave my comments on it until then, but much criticism has been made of the Underground. The Northern line was mentioned by the hon. Member for Battersea. I have a cutting from *The Times* of 2 December 1924, which said that a new chapter had been opened in respect of railways in south London. It said that the city and south London line was being extended and continued:

"The service to be opened on the line will consist of 26 trains an hour in each direction between Clapham Common and Camden Town."

I wonder whether there are anything like 26 trains an hour running today.

A controversial plan was introduced the summer before last for one-person operation on the Piccadilly line. I have grave doubts about the safety of that scheme, as had a driver writing in *The Guardian* on 22 November 1988, who said:

"If the Railway Inspectorate got it wrong on King's Cross, what grounds have we to believe that they got it right on deep level tube One Person Operation."

In a reply to a question that I tabled, the then Minister with responsibilities for railways said:

"These plans have been shown and demonstrated to the Railway Inspectorate, which is satisfied that they will provide a proper level of safety."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1987; Vol. 120, c. 607.]

I cannot agree with the one-person operation on the Piccadilly line or, in particular, the controversial proposals for delays and difficulties.

The Government are at fault for not providing a comprehensive planning service for traffic and transport in London. It was available under the GLC, when road, rail and other forms of transport were co-ordinated. The Government are irresponsible in their financial pressures on British Rail and London Transport. In the end, such pressures prejudice safety standards if only by pressing staff at the difficult end of the service to cut corners and to risk tiredness and all the other things about which we have read in the newspapers in the past few days. That comes directly from the client-contractor basis which the Government are pressing upon staff at every level. It is not a concomitant of safety, as we have seen in recent incidents. The Government must change their minds and think seriously about the matter, otherwise public safety will continue to be at risk.

11.5 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): As the remaining time is short, my remarks will be brief.

If we were honest about it, we would agree that public transport and transport generally in London is in absolute chaos. Traffic speeds are the lowest that they have been since the first world war. Overcrowding on Underground trains is at danger point for most of the day. Bus journeys are longer and slower than they have been for the past 30 years. The Government are spending less in proportion and in real terms on supporting public transport in London than at any time since the war, and they propose to spend less in the future. Their record on public transport in London is deplorable. They have abolished the GLC, they have refused to set up a public transport authority for London, and they now insist on London Regional Transport making a profitable return on its operation. No public transport undertaking anywhere in Europe or in most of the United States makes any return of the sort that is being sought from British Rail and London Transport.

Although we are not here to debate the details of what happened at Clapham and King's Cross, things are beginning to show that, when there is a shortage of staff —they have been dismissed to make ends meet—

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

insufficient cleaning of stations and insufficient maintenance of trains, danger is the order of the day, and the result is death and danger for the travelling public. The Minister should listen carefully to what the people of London are saying about that.

I ask the Minister a couple of specific questions, because there is no time for me to say all that I want to say. His Department employs about 14,000 people. I understand that it employs a mere 69 people to study possible future rail developments in this country, even fewer studying pedestrianisation and pedestrian matters, and even fewer studying water-borne transport. The vast majority are obsessed with road building and road building schemes.

Is it sensible, through road assessment studies, to propose building motorways in London which, excluding land costs, will cost £14 million a mile, when the hon. Gentleman could be improving and developing public rail and bus services throughout London? Surely to God we will not solve London's transport problems by encouraging into London more and more commuter traffic, which is heavily subsidised by tax relief and causes untold chaos and pollution in constituencies such as mine, and creates greater traffic jams in central London.

I ask the Minister to say now that the road assessment studies are to be dropped and that he recognises the massive opposition that exists in my constituency, in Hornsey and Wood Green, in Finchley and, no doubt, in his own constituency, to the very notion of going back to motorway building in London. People are demanding a sane, safe and sensible transport policy for London. That must mean the development of a public transport system, investment in railways, and an end to the crazy financial relationship between the Government, British Rail and London Regional Transport. That relationship demands endless staff cuts to pursue the mythical profitable return that they cannot achieve, and danger is the result.

We live in a large city—the capital city of this country. Its public transport system is deplorable. I hope that the Minister will recognise that priority must be given to ending the road building plans and developing rail plans.

Will the Minister put pressure on British Rail not to make the decision on the siting of the Channel tunnel terminal—which I understand it is due to make early in January—without going into the environmental impact studies and without properly assessing Stratford? British Rail may do that because it is determined to develop at King's Cross, because that is where it can achieve the best rate of return and it has been told that its rail plans must be self-financing.

Will the Minister assure me that he will lift the blight that extends over my area because of the road-building plans and put pressure on British Rail not to allow the development of Gillespie park and Gillespie sidings near Finsbury Park? They are valuable open spaces that have been usefully developed by local children and the local community. Will he further accept the Finsbury Park community group's plans for Isledon road sidings, which provide a mix of public open space, housing and jobs for local industries and for local people, rather than continuing to put pressure on British Rail to achieve the greatest possible return on all its land sales, as that policy is damaging many inner-London communities and preventing the creation of open spaces, decent housing or valuable local jobs?

11.10 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for initiating the debate. The expressions of dissatisfaction with London's transport have been fairly constant from both sides of the House—perhaps uniquely in my 15 or so years in this place. No one will blame the Minister personally. We probably all suspect that at heart he disagrees with the fundamental philosophy expressed so often by the Secretary of State—that there can be no central planning for London's transport. Yet the speeches from both sides of the House—again, this is probably unique—have suggested that that is just what is wrong with London's transport and traffic. The market has palpably failed as it inevitably must to solve the problems of London's traffic. *[Interruption.]* I am reminded that it has probably made them worse.

I shall not urge a re-formed Greater London council on the Government, because they would immediately reject such a course but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) reminded us, much of the good work done by the technical people as well as the elected representatives in the GLC has been undone since the council was abolished. It has been undone to one purpose—to save money. That will not come as a blinding revelation to hon. Members on either side of the House.

When the Bill to strip the GLC of responsibility for London's traffic was before us back in 1984, there were numerous exchanges across the Floor of the House about the Bill's impact and about the undemocratic and eventually unjust solutions—solutions that were also uneconomic, because they failed to alleviate London's traffic problems—that the Bill would bring about. All our suggestions were rejected, largely contemptuously, by the then Secretary of State, who is now Secretary of State for the Environment. Talking about London's transport problems and his solutions for the future, the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "There are great possibilities for reducing the amount that will have to be taken from the ratepayers by reducing the cost to London Transport and, therefore, the subsidy paid for it. The more I hear about the potential for saving, the more I believe that that is the aspect on which to concentrate. That is where the ratepayers' relief, in part, will come."—[*Official Report*, 9 April 1984; Vol. 58, c. 34.]

The obvious result of that policy and philosophy was seen in the wreckage scattered across Clapham junction a week or so ago. It is seen outside this building on most nights of the week, and on the roads into our city on most mornings. Over the past decade the Government have been obsessed more with saving money than with resolving transport problems, so those troubles lie directly at their door. That philosophy and policy is responsible for the present chaos.

The Government deliberately try to evade any long-term commitment to greater expenditure on public transport in this city and elsewhere. Five years ago they set up the Serpell report which said in chapter 2(22) that there was no possibility of any growth in commuter traffic over the next few years. That shows how wrong those self-styled experts were. In the past six years the number of people using the Underground has increased by 50 per cent. and the number of those using Network SouthEast services by 25 per cent. Each day between 7 am and 10 am 900,000

people enter central London by rail, and over the next 10 years peak demand is expected to increase by as much as 30 per cent. and off-peak demand by 45 per cent. Surely the Minister will not tell us that increases of that size will be catered for by private capital and that somehow people in the private sector will come forward with billions of pounds to save us from traffic chaos on public transport and our roads. That lack of central planning has contributed enormously to our present problems.

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) concentrated almost exclusively on the chaos on our roads. He may be interested to know that the number of vehicles entering the city during peak hours can be as high as 50,000 and that more than 70 per cent. of all vehicles on London's roads are cars and no fewer than 43 per cent. of those are company cars. No other country in the world has the company car perk to the extent that we do. Inevitably, if people are given company cars as part of what they call a remuneration package, they will use those cars. They will take the view that if someone else is paying, they might as well sit in some degree of subsidised comfort, rather than join the rest of us in London's congested, expensive, overcrowded public transport.

In previous years the excuse for our enormous number of company cars was that salaries were low and taxation high. This Government have taken care of all that. As they continuously boast, taxes are among the lowest in Europe and for directors remuneration is among the highest. Yet 43 per cent. of cars continue to enter London in the rush hour, subsidised directly by a particular company. It does not make any sense. I hope that the belated efforts of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to tax company cars to prevent the present congestion will continue.

The Government's regular reply to my hon. Friends and others about the lack of investment in the railway system is that investment has never been higher than it is now. That is another myth and is just not true. On 16 December there was a letter in the *Financial Times* headed "Investment in the railways" from a Mr. John Wells. I presume that he is not the former Conservative Member. He describes himself as a member of the Faculty of Economics at Cambridge university. He wrote:

"following the period 1981-1984, in which, for four consecutive years, the lowest-ever levels of investment since the Second World War were recorded, there has indeed been a strong recovery in railway investment in recent years. Nevertheless, railway investment in 1987 (the latest year for which data are available) was considerably below that for the period 1975-1979 as well as for 1965-66."

I do not have time to go into the figures in detail, but I shall send them to the Department of Transport. I hope that we shall then hear the end of the myth that investment under this Government has been higher than at any other time in the country's history.

The Secretary of State for Transport said that the terms of the inquiry into the Clapham junction disaster, headed by Mr. Anthony Hidden, QC, are to be the same as those under which Mr. Desmond Fennell, QC, was appointed to inquire into the King's Cross disaster. The House will not need reminding that Mr. Fennell decided that vital questions about such matters as staff morale and investment were ultra vires the inquiry. However, it did not stop him expressing the view that such lack of investment and low morale had no direct bearing on the King's Cross disaster.

Mr. Spearing: Without any evidence.

Mr. Snape: Mr. Fennell admitted that he had no evidence.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will make it clear that those vital matters will be considered by Mr. Hidden and that we will be able to see the impact of low investment on tragedies such as that of Clapham junction. Will the Under-Secretary tell us why half the trains using the busiest junction in the world—not just in Europe—on the former London-south western railway were controlled by a signal box more than 50 years old? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will assure us that Mr. Hidden will be allowed to consider those vital points.

I make a plea to the Under-Secretary, even at this late stage and after hearing so many excuses from the Government, that proper investment will be found to, at least, allow us to move some way towards solving London's public transport problems.

I shall repeat the words of Miss Lynda Lee-Potter in the *Daily Mail* of Wednesday 14 December. That is not a publication that is normally over-sentimental to those who work in the railway industry, nor is it one that has traditionally supported the Labour party, but Miss Lynda Lee-Potter said:

"I only hope this"—

that is the Clapham disaster—

"is an awesome warning to both them"—

that is British Rail management—

"and the Government that they can't make a lottery out of people's lives, that money has to be made available and made available now.

Paul Channon can rationalise 'til he's blue in the face, but compared with other countries the money poured into our railways is pitiful. We once had a great, fine and enviable system that is becoming shoddy and shameful and breaking the hearts of the long-service, loyal workforce."

No Member of the Opposition could put it better. Some months ago I asked the Secretary of State to consider appointing Miss Lynda Lee-Potter a member of the British Railways Board, and I repeat that plea tonight. It appears that she knows a damn sight more about the transport problems of London and this country than anybody at the Dispatch Box has for the past 10 years.

11.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): One hundred years ago, William Morris, a Socialist Utopian, wrote these words:

"having said good night very amicably, took his way home by himself to a western suburb, using the means of travelling which civilisation has forced upon us like a habit. As he sat in that vapour-bath of hurried and discontented humanity, a carriage of the underground railway, he like others, stewed discontentedly".

The first thing that the comrade did when he woke up 115 years or more later was to cheer about the fact that the underground railway had been abolished. I am glad that the Labour party now supports it. It is important that we take London's transport opportunities——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham North-West): "News from Nowhere".

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, "News from Nowhere". I congratulate the hon. Gentleman. Instead of shouting out as if he were still on Capital radio, as he was earlier, it would be sensible if we tried to follow the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), who followed my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) in introducing this debate, on the serious sequence of movement in London.

[Mr. Bottomley]

It is plain that transport in London is becoming more and more important and is becoming more popular among newspaper writers—I shall come back to Lynda Lee-Potter in a moment. If there had been a strategic planning authority in London in 1982 and if it had asked London's national newspapers, then congregated in Fleet street, what transport arrangements they wanted for their journalists and production staff to get to and from work and for delivering their newspapers, the answer would have been rail. In the past six years, however, every national newspaper has left Fleet street. Their staffs cannot use public transport and they are trying to drive to and from Wapping, the Isle of Dogs, Farringdon road and Barkers. They are now discovering that that is not possible. I welcome the fact that the newspapers are now facing up to the problems of London transport network, just as others have already done.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea for the broad and serious way in which he introduced the debate. It is now common ground that movement in and out of London must take place predominantly by rail. My hon. Friend drew attention to the safety record of the railways.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked about the terms of reference of the inquiry into the disaster at Clapham. The aim of the inquiry, as my right hon. Friend has said, is to establish the facts and to ensure that it never happens again. The terms of reference are similar to those for the Fennell inquiry and should be wide enough to cover all the relevant matters. If there is any addition to them, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman or make sure that his questions are followed up.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is present because what he said was very unfair. He knows perfectly well that the Parker report—I am grateful to him for lending me the booklet so that I can emphasise my point—said:

"The purpose of this discussion paper is to test public reaction and to establish the views of relevant authorities before deciding whether to undertake additional work."

I understand that the cross-rail study is being considered as part of the central London rail study.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: No, I have only about four minutes to answer a long debate.

The point about safety is that 5,200 people a year die on our roads. The more movement we can transfer to the railways, while maintaining the safety on the Underground and overground, the better. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] The Labour party cheers, but that should not be a matter of dispute. If Labour Members are cheering because they believe that radial commuting, which needs to rely on the railways, is a new or controversial idea to be mooted by either side of the House, they have not listened to our debates.

If the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) uses the word "motorway" as part of the assessment studies that are not purely road assessment studies, he is deliberately using a word that has been cast out by the Government. His only purpose in doing so must be to mislead, and I hope that he will not do it again. It probably was not intentional, but the word "motorway" does not work with the assessment studies. If the hon. Gentleman stopped chirping that word, his constituents would learn more from him and me.

It is clear from the stage 1 reports that the Londoner's needs are taken into account. As hon. Members have said, perhaps it would be a good idea if we had more lanes going out of London than coming in.

It is also important to recognise what was said about the rail links to the Channel tunnel and the rest of Europe. I was asked if I would oppose any new railway line going into a tunnel in my constituency. I said that I would not, and that it was impossible to work for railways and then to say that those lines should not come into London. As the hon. Member for Norwood has said, we must be bold and, although trying to ensure that the right choice is made and the compensation is correct, we must openly state that it is necessary at times to build railways and that that is not always convenient. We will not get extra movement on the railways in Europe or in Britain without paying a price for those lines.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea has spoken of the renewed use of the west London line. I have looked at some of the nice Christmas cards from Parkland walk, which says that it is opposed to road and rail schemes. But we must be prepared to accept that railways will cause some discomfort to people along the lines.

We lead the world, certainly Europe, in road safety and we lead the world in the provision for the disabled, but there is more to be done. Let us remember our Airbus service, Taxicard, dial-a-ride and the availability of wheelchairs in our taxis—not to mention our minibuses.

I say to all in the Labour party: they should contact their friends in Europe to get across the point about the minibus driver licensing regulations—how a minor adaptation to move from an additional test to an assurance of safety, perhaps asking people to wait two years before they drive a minibus, will enable us to protect the 85,000 minibuses in this country, 11,000 of which have wheelchair adaptations on the back. Another 40,000 or so are used for the elderly, for children, for scout and Church groups and for common interest groups such as students. Then we shall be likely to preserve safe transport on the roads.

We want to protect safety on the roads, on the Underground and on the railways. We want to improve safety on the roads and to ensure that London prospers with greater movement, as well as environmental relief and road casualty reduction.

Community Care

11.30 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): This debate is about community care. Although the Government have continually promised reports and proposals on this subject, because of problems with the policy towards it, there were no proposals in the Queen's Speech to legislate on the problems in the community care scheme, despite the publication of the Griffiths report earlier this year.

I want to record some of the criticisms of the scheme made by some of the carers and organisations involved in the problems faced by people. I also want to discuss the Griffiths report's proposals and the fundamental problems of the community care scheme.

The Audit Commission review, published in December 1986, laid out the principles of community care, with which we would not disagree. It went on to describe the policies of successive Governments—but what has actually happened has been quite different. The Audit Commission made a series of proposals. The first concerned short-term funding to avoid the long-term waste of two systems that work inadequately and struggle to survive in parallel. The second related to how the social security system links with the community care policy. The review was concerned to ensure that there were no "perverse incentives" involved in encouraging residential, rather than community, care or provision for people to make a profit—I add, out of someone else's need. Thirdly, the Audit Commission recommended a more rational organisational structure for community care policy.

I want to deal with the transition from long-stay hospitals of mentally or physically handicapped people, and with those who have remained in the community with their families. What services are provided for them?

In July 1987, I received representations from the Avon group of societies for the mentally handicapped. It expressed its worry about the development of a two-tier system of caring for people in the community. I contacted my county council, which explained—this seems to be a common pattern across the country—that the policy and plans are quite well developed for services for people who are leaving hospital. Finance is not always available, but the employment plans are beginning to be put in place. It went on to say that there is no Government money to provide comparable services for people who have always lived in the community. That includes the cost of respite care, residential care and day provision which runs into many millions of pounds.

In my constituency surgeries—many others will have experienced this—it is especially distressing to hear the stories of women, who tend to be the carers in our society, explaining the difficulties with their children who have reached the age of 19. There is no provision for their care in the community. The Down's Syndrome Association stressed that point. It said that the money available is directed to the transfer of patients from long-term hospitals and to speeding the closure of such hospitals. Yet 52 per cent. of the mentally handicapped already live at home in the community, and not enough services are being provided for them.

I do not say that people should stay in long-term hospitals. But if we are to have a community care policy, it must be exactly that. The Avon Mental Handicap Action Group wrote to me saying that the closure of long-stay hospitals was going well, but that the same could not be said of the integration of the former patients into the community. That was not to say that the community had rejected those people, but that the intensive support, care and encouragement which they need is not being provided.

Another letter from the Down's Syndrome Association said:

"More and more parents are discovering that there is nothing at all on offer for their mentally handicapped sons and daughters as they leave school, and no adequate respite-care to make life endurable. Also as the subnormality hospitals close, there is no long-term care to replace it for the severely handicapped already living at home. Such a crisis-orientated service adds to the already intolerable burden that these parents have to bear. The most severely handicapped and multiply handicapped people are the worst-served. As they grow into large adults, their parents are becoming older and less able to cope."

Many families who are incredibly devoted to their members must put up with inadequate services which lead to frustration, demoralisation and—in some people's lives—panic and fear about what will happen to their children.

The National Schizophrenia Fellowship was so worried that earlier this year it launched a nationwide campaign, making the point that the transfer of people into the community without sufficient support services was causing greater pain, more anguish, more suicides, more sick people, more people ending up in prison and more people sleeping rough on the streets.

I received a letter from a parent making representations on behalf of her 14-year-old son, who suffers from Down's syndrome. She said:

"In March this year a group of parents of mentally handicapped young adults formed the Avon Mental Handicap Action Group. We are extremely worried about our 'adult' children's future. Avon County Council is in a desperate situation—we are told by all three parties"—

Avon county council is run by a Tory-SLD administration—

"that there are no resources to provide the residential and respite care so desperately needed for mentally handicapped adults living in the community and no resources to provide the extra day-care facilities".

The distress that this situation is causing aged parents who are still caring for their children is beyond belief. That mother, as a younger parent, believes that her child has a right to a life of his own and she can see no hope for enriching his life in the future if those facilities are not provided.

After reviewing the services available, the Bristol community health council concluded in its 1987 annual report that, although it strongly supported—as I and the Labour party do—the principles that underpin community care, sadly, the reality is very different.

I want to remind the House that 3·25 million women in Britain are unpaid carers. A carer is someone who looks after a friend or relative who has a physical or mental disability or is ill or impaired by infirmity. Most carers are women. Without their help, the health and social services simply could not cope, but what about the health needs of the carers themselves? Caring can sometimes be a lifelong responsibility and can take a tremendous toll of the carer's life. Carers are six times more likely to suffer a breakdown in mental health and many carers are themselves elderly with failing health. To leave them struggling in the community is simply unforgivable.

Shelter compiled an extensive report on Bristol outlining the problems that people who are discharged

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from hospital face in trying to find housing in the city. The problem cannot be shrugged off by saying that it is the fault of an inadequate housing authority. There is already a serious housing problem in Bristol and those people, who may have been in hospital for a long time, are tossed out into the world and are not receiving the support that they need.

Let me quote two cases. The first is a couple who are both ex-patients from a mental hospital and have been brought out into the community. Their income dropped substantially as a result of the housing benefit changes and they find it difficult to cope financially even at the best of times—who does not find it difficult on social security? —but they now find themselves living in fear of building up debts.

Another couple said to me:

"We find it very difficult to manage our money having spent a lot of our lives in hospital. We have just about managed to pay off all our bills until this year and we simply do not know how we shall cope."

The income of another ex-patient, who lives in a house as a lodger, dropped from £49 a week to £41·70 a week as a result of housing benefit changes. He should pay £40 a week for board and lodging, but his landlady, out of the goodness of her heart, gave him back pocket money to help him get by. She has taken on the responsibility of a carer and is saving the state work, although such a demand should not be made of such a person.

Three people discharged from hospital in 1976 ran up enormous electricity bills in my constituency. I received details of the case from the Bristol Society of the Mentally Handicapped which pointed out how those people had been deserted by every agency simply because there was no clear line of responsibility as to who was the care manager.

In June, I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State asking him specific questions about proposals for improving care in the community. I was told that the Griffiths report had undertaken a review of community care policy and that when the proposals were available—they were actually published on 16 March—they would be considered jointly with the recommendations from the committee on residential care and proposals would be brought forward in due course.

How long is "due course"? We have had a Queen's Speech. Where are the proposals? The Griffiths report proposed that a Minister should be responsible for these matters. It also stressed the changes in the responsibilities of social services. It made recommendations about resources and about the role of the National Health Service. It recognised the carers, their unpaid role and their need to be supported. When all that information is available, why are there no proposals?

I have many criticisms of the Griffiths report. The philosophy behind community care was not properly investigated, and there are some errors. The balance between the public and private sectors must be examined. There is no place for the profit motive in the care and health of people in our community. That is not stated clearly in the Griffiths report.

People are being transferred from mental hospitals and long-stay hospitals without the necessary service developments in the area health authorities to support those people in the community. The whole emphasis of the strategy so far has been on the shift of responsibility from the National Health Service to local authorities. However, that strategy is cruelly undermined by the Government, who continue to batter local authority finance around the head so that the authorities do not have the money to make the necessary provision.

The central problem is, who has the responsibility of the community care manager? That responsibility falls between two stools. For example, a constituent of mine was resident in a private residential home which closed because the owners decided that they did not want to run it any longer. My constituent was found a place in another residence and was transferred. However, none of his belongings were transferred and were left packed up in the other home. No arrangements were made to transfer his social security, so he had no money. His social worker was away on holiday. I am not decrying social workers for taking holidays and in this case I understand that the co-ordination failed.

The problem in the private sector is that private sector residential provision comes and goes all the time. There are lots of reasons for that, but what happens to the residents in those circumstances? Who is responsible for ensuring that they are adequately provided for and transferred to new accommodation?

We must also consider the training of staff in community care. There is no central personnel policy. We must not simply transfer people; we must transfer the staff as well. As that has not been done, staff morale in hospitals has been undermined. Staff feel insecure and unhappy about their futures. There has been no central strategy about retraining or recognition of qualifications. The transfer of staff has been piecemeal and unco-ordinated in many respects. Managers are becoming reluctant to provide funds for building fabrics because they know that those buildings will not exist for long and there is also a real problem with the declining standards of care in long-term hospitals.

The Government have made no provision for those problems. They have done even worse: underpinning the whole community care policy is a social security system that is cruelly cutting people's income. Under that policy, the Government are automatically transferring people from hospitals to live in poverty on social security benefits without the support they need.

I conclude by quoting from "A better Life—A Charter for You to Sign and Support", produced by MIND. It sums up the state of the current community care policy admirably:

"Mental health services in Britain are underfunded, inadequately staffed, dominated by huge, crumbling institutions, hamstrung by outmoded ideas with no consensus for the future. The state of decline which brings crisis to mental health care brings personal tragedy to many thousands of people with mental illness. Trapped in Victorian institutions, 40 to a ward, with no privacy, no choice, no power, and no way out. Or"—

the alternative as it exists now—

"living on the breadline in a dingy bedsit with no friends, no support, no job, and no home. The choice is stark."

That is not choice. We need to know when the Government will bring forward proposals for enhancing and supporting the community care policy. The tragedy is finding itself in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people all over the country. It is appalling that, while the Government claim to be targeting those in greatest need, they make no progress in community care.

11.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The House owes a considerable debt to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) for raising this centrally important issue. I found myself sympathising with a number of her points, but she was less than charitable to a Government who have, among other things, overseen the largest single attempt to alleviate the extraordinary conditions suffered by the large number of people who have been institutionalised unnecessarily—and, by modern standards, often wholly improperly—in hospitals for the mentally ill throughout the country.

It is often said in my constituency that the Government's programme of what is inelegantly called decanting the mentally handicapped from institutions into the community has been little thought through and leaves many of them uncared for. That may be the case in some authorities, but it is not in mine.

After one of the hospitals for the mentally handicapped in my constituency was half-emptied, it was thought that it would be nice if a number of its former patients, having lived in the community for some time, could return to visit friends remaining in the hospital. Thus, the former patients were gathered up from their foster homes, and so on, in the community and taken to their old hospital. When they arrived, only one of their number was prepared to leave the bus, because the others were terrified of being returned to what had in fact been an extremely well run, cheerful and hospitable institution. Nevertheless, so much did the former patients prefer being members of the community that they did not want to leave the bus.

Their attitude is something for which the Government can and should rightly take credit. However, I share the hon. Lady's anxiety that sometimes those who come with a dowry, as it were, from the National Health Service receive preferential treatment over the large number of others looked after at home by courageous people who are close to, or even beyond, breaking point, struggling with difficulties over which they have no control.

It is a complex issue, and I sympathise with the Government in not having yet made their proposals. However, I have less sympathy with them for having refused a formal debate on the Griffiths report before publication of the White Paper. I pressed for one but was rebuffed again and again. To me it is a sensible way of letting the House express its views before the White Paper is published. Nevertheless it is a complex issue, and I should like briefly to refer to one or two key issues within it.

The first is the question of choice. It is probable that scarcely a family in the country will, in the foreseeable future, have direct contact with at least one of its members who requires community care in one form or another. In that respect community care is unlike many other issues that we debate. Among that vast number is an increasing proportion who are accustomed to making choices because they have had the opportunity to do so all their lives.

I remember addressing a meeting of the British Association of Social Workers two years ago. The room divided neatly into two halves: one half vilified me for suggesting that people should be entitled to choose to go into private care if they wished, while the other half felt that it was a perfectly natural expression of the lifestyle that such people had enjoyed throughout their lives. I expect that if I addressed the same audience now the proportions would have changed dramatically, and that most social workers now accept that it is perfectly reasonable for someone who can afford it to choose private care.

The fact remains, however, that either at the time of making their choice or soon afterwards, such people are extremely vulnerable. It is crucial that, whether they are in private or public care, they should be able to rely on standards being guaranteed. That means a common system of inspection of all kinds of residential and community provision, and I hope that the Government will bring forward clear proposals for a standardised system of inspection of community care, foster and residential homes.

I do not agree with the implication of the hon. Member for Bristol, South that private care is more haphazard, by its very nature, than public care. There are as many horror stories of haphazard and poor-quality care in the public as in the private sector.

I strongly believe that part of the definition of choice is that it be informed choice. It is important for those in need of community care to have someone to speak for them if they feel uncertain or indeed incapable of speaking for themselves. I was proud to be one of the sponsors of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, whose principal architect, the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench tonight. I believe that the part of the Act that deals with advocacy is very important. I am not suggesting an army of people to second-guess the professionals. I am suggesting that those who are not able to speak for themselves are entitled to expect someone to speak for them who can be trusted to do it properly.

Then there is the question of prevention. One of the bizarre features—to use the words of the Audit Commission report, the "perverse incentives" which operate in the sphere of dependency—is the fact that for the lack of a couple of hours' respite care during a week people may be precipitated into enormously expensive and inappropriate care far earlier than they need be. I am sure that the Minister is aware of the large number of households in which carers are themselves in danger of breaking down completely. If they are allowed to break down through lack of respite, two people will be thrown into total dependency at colossal expense when a relatively small expenditure could have avoided it.

To return to a matter that I have raised here before and about which I feel passionately, may we please persuade those who design and build our houses to build in from the beginning a substantial proportion of those features that make it possible for people to remain independent for far longer than is possible today? It is absurd for builders to suggest that first-time buyers would be put off buying a house because the lintel on every door was 1½ in wider than the lintel on standard doors or because there was a ramp instead of steps. A ramp is every bit as beneficial to the mother who has to cope with a push chair or the middle-aged woman who has to cope with a heavy shopping basket on wheels as it is to somebody in a wheelchair.

I understand that such items cost about £1,000 to install when a house is built but that they cost up to £20,000 if they have to be installed as adaptations. Consequently, those who need specially adapted homes are inevitably placed in a ghetto. No matter how humane the local

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authority or housing association may be, they become "ghettoised" and put together because that is the only way in which their needs can be met. That is an absurdity to which all of us ought to turn our attention.

The key question, which was raised by the Griffiths report and the hon. Member for Bristol, South, is, who is responsible for the community care service as a whole? I believe that considerable advances have been made in many local authority social services departments, including the Kent social services department. Aided by some good district health authorities that have made it perfectly clear that they are not prepared to release patients until the social services department is willing to receive them, we are working out a partnership of which we can be proud. It seems to me perfectly sound to suggest that good local authority social services departments have been rightly nominated by Griffiths as those who should be responsible for community care.

If the Government believe that another body ought to be responsible for community care, it would be perfectly reasonable for hon. Members to debate that question, but I utter a word of warning. To a civil servant—I used to be one—sitting at a desk working out theoretical patterns of responsible administration, the idea of involving the family practitioner committee, because general practitioners have such an enormous part to play in the day-to-day care of many vulnerable people, seems to be enormously attractive, but I suggest that it may prove to be the ingredient that makes the responsibility for community care fall to pieces. Many general practitioners do not want to be directly responsible for the total care in the community of many vulnerable people. They do not believe that they have been trained for it and they do not necessarily feel that they are equipped to provide such care. The way in which they are remunerated means that, on the whole, there will always be an incentive to offload the most difficult and the most severely burdensome of their patients, for reasons that I fully understand and that are in no way deplorable.

There is a marked difference between the way in which medically trained personnel think about people's problems and the way in which people who have been trained as social workers think about people's problems.

Although I know that many general practitioners and hospital consultants will bite my head off for saying it, on the whole, medical care is more authoritative, and in many cases reinforces the sense that the patient is dependent upon the advice and authority of the doctor. Good social work makes a real attempt to preserve for as long as possible the equality of authority between the client and the social worker. That is a crude way of putting it, and I realise that it will read badly tomorrow, but we should be very wary of turning community care into too much of a medical model.

It is perfectly clear that, with their long history, their long training and their long habit of controlling the institutions and organisations in which they work, if members of the medical profession are given part of the responsibility it will not be long before they hold all the responsibility. I believe that they would be less willing to use social work techniques and rather too anxious to use nursing techniques, and that would not be to the long-term benefit of people needing community care.

The issues are extremely difficult. They are issues of which I know my hon. and learned Friend the Minister is fully seized. There has seldom been a managerial report on such a sensitive subject that has been welcomed by such an enormous variety of professional organisations. In that welcome there is a clear message to the Government—"For goodness' sake, let us make up our minds as soon as we can about how best to look after the most vulnerable people in the community." I believe that the programme which the Government have put into such courageous effect in so many parts of the country of unloading people from institutions into the community has called into being a wide variety of responses, many of which are of high quality and are functioning extremely well. More than anything else, the best examples which operate in Britain should be generalised as quickly as possible for the benefit of those vulnerable people.

12.7 am

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The Audit Commission's report in 1986 said that

"community care policy is in some disarray".

At that time that was an understatement, and the position has certainly worsened since 1986. The present shambles has been deliberately planned and constructed as part of the process of pushing Britain towards a private welfare system.

The crux of the matter is that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) pointed out, while local authority domiciliary care has been hammered by Government cuts, private residential care has been given open-ended public subsidy to the tune of £1 billion in the current year in income support to people in private care. That is the Association of Directors of Social Services figure, with which I am sure the Minister is familiar.

I wish to refer specifically to the care of the elderly about whom I am deeply concerned. Having worked in social work for more than 20 years, my general feeling as a social worker and as a politician on the local council was that institutional care for elderly people was the last resort, the final refuge or the final means of caring for an individual. Under the system introduced by the present Government, it is frequently the first port of call. The encouraging trend away from institutional care that has developed over many years has been completely reversed and the institution has been re-invented by the Government. The institutional care model offers the Government the easiest route towards the establishment of a free-market welfare system. So far, free marketeers have not really found a way of making domiciliary care pay. Care vouchers may enable that to come about. At present, the money is made in the residential sector.

The present system is geared towards pushing elderly people into residential care, whether they need it or not. A 60-year-old woman or 65-year-old man may retire and qualify for a pension but they may be as fit or fitter than many hon. Members in the Chamber. However, they could go to the Department of Social Security, having obtained admission to a private home, and ask for income support to cover the fees. I challenge the Minister to deny that the DSS may pay that money. It is in the interests of the institution's proprietors to have a fit person of 60 or 65 in their care because they can make more money by having independent people in their home.

I am concerned that that system exists. I can give as an example a neighbour of mine. A lady in her early 80s lived

with her sister until her sister died. The family wanted to ensure that the house in which they were living was sold. The old lady, who could have coped on her own, was shunted off into private care 15 or 20 miles from where she had lived all her life. That is wrong. There was an incentive to put her into institutional care. She could have remained independent in the community. The system did not pay for the care she could have had in the home environment but paid to put her into an institution.

I know of a recent case involving—I am sure that the woman will not mind me mentioning her name—a Mrs. Palmer. I served on the local council with her husband many moons ago. In her old age she became dependent on her family. Unfortunately, her only daughter lived in the midlands. She had to travel to Yorkshire virtually every weekend to care for her mother. They could not obtain any support from the system for the work involved in caring for her in the community. When she went into hospital she was told that she required permanent institutional care. The lady's daughter came to see me. She had struggled without the benefits that she should have had when she was helping her mother to be independent, but she found that once institutional care was mentioned the benefits flowed. Therefore, that woman can go into institutional care without any problem.

The system works the wrong way round. There are huge inbuilt incentives to persuade individuals to give up their independence and move into institutions. The Government have attacked local authorities' ability to offer services geared to keeping elderly people in their own homes.

The Audit Commission said that the current system of redistribution of rate support grant acts as a deterrent to the expansion of community-based services. The current funding policies clearly discriminate in favour of private residential care at the expense of crucial areas of public domiciliary services.

The present system constitutes an irresponsible misuse of public resources. In the Wakefield district council area the number of people over 85 years of age will increase by 41 per cent. between 1981 and 1991. However, there will be no commensurate increase in the funding of the National Health Service or the social services to cover that huge change of demand on the local services. David Lane, the director of Wakefield social services, told me today that if Wakefield received its share of the £1 billion worth of subsidies being pumped into the private sector this year, it would have, by a simple division of population, an additional £6·6 million to keep people in the community and not shunt them into institutional care, frequently against their wishes.

The system results in an uneven and unfair distribution of public funds. About £20 million or £30 million is given to the east Sussex area to subsidise private residential care. It must be borne in mind that subsidies ease the housing and social services burdens of local authorities and reduce their expenditure. That £20 million or £30 million should be compared with the £2 million that Wakefield gains under this exercise. There is clearly a discrepancy in the way in which various amounts are pumped into local economies. There are also differences in the number of people in private care. Over a year ago, *New Society* stated that as many as seven times as many private nursing beds existed in the south-west as in the northern region.

The most worrying aspect is what is happening to elderly people. Domiciliary care is not only a cheaper option but in most cases infinitely better for the individual. I know from my experience as a social worker that elderly people live longer when they are supported in their communities by friends and neighbours rather than being moved 20, 30 or 40 miles into a private institution.

The system rewards those in the private sector who pursue the worst policies, have the largest institutions and use economies of scale by packing in more and more residents. I visited a home, which fortunately was threatened with closure, where there were seven people in one room, including somebody sleeping under the fireplace. The system rewards those who skimp on staffing and pay the lowest wages. In that regard, the private sector should be considered in detail. I know of a 17-year-old girl who is receiving £1 an hour but is left in complete charge of a private home, which is irresponsible. We must consider these facts when comparing the two sectors.

I am not so ideologically blind as to say that there is no such thing as a good private residential home, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South that profit should not be made out of care. Small private homes offer good homely care, but are penalised by the funding system. As a matter of urgency, the Government must consider that problem.

Just as private health care ignores the chronically sick, the private care sector does not want to know those who are incontinent, confused or multiply handicapped. If those people get into a private home, they will rapidly find themselves being moved into local authority part III accommodation. I am aware of this only too well because over a year ago my mother ended up in local authority part III accommodation. I felt sorry for her and the staff because of the day-to-day problems that they faced. As a consequence of the development of private care, local authority part III accommodation is being used as a dumping ground for those who the private sector does not want to know.

The Government want to break the dominant position of local authorities on community care, which has been clear since they took office. In their first Budget they slashed 9 per cent. from personal social services at the same time as they started shunting money into private residential care. When they wanted to break the dominant position of local authorities, the Griffiths report came along and presented them with some difficulties. That is why the Government have difficulty in responding to what Griffiths said. That gentleman, who is a great friend of the Prime Minister and has done everything so well in the National Health Service and caused all the problems that many of us have to face at local level, has come up with a solution that simply is not acceptable to the Government. It means that local authorities have a fundamental role to play in the future monitoring and provision of care.

Local authorities now face many problems. They find it impossible to develop long-term plans when they are faced with the completely uncontrolled expansion of the private sector. They cannot plan for future services when they do not know how many private homes will be in the independent sector. The Government want the complete privatisation of social care. They want to see an end to the collective, public sector provision of social care.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that a clique of Right-wing extremists are in control in Bradford? Bradford is being used as a test bed by the Tory central office. The Tory party—the law and

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

order party—is in the process of selling 15 old people's homes. Although the decision is subject to judicial review and Mr. Speaker has said that we should approach a debate on the matter with caution, the Bradford Tories have shown no such respect for the law courts and have gone ahead and discussed the matter in detail in committees. That bears out my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. Of all the things that have happened in Bradford, the most unacceptable, lowest point that has been reached by the new group in control is in respect of its proposals relating to the elderly. The Bradford Tories are not the first to make that proposal. Other Tory authorities have done so, but they have not gone as far as the Bradford Tories appear to be going.

The Government are actively encouraging an increasing number of large business concerns to move into the private sector. I hope that the Minister is listening, because I shall refer to an official of whom he is probably aware. An organisation called Premier Care was launched a couple of weeks ago. It is funded by—this is an example of the extent to which businesses get involved in private sector caring—Fulton Prebon Sterling Ltd., reputed to be the third largest money broking firm in the world. It is interesting that one of the directors is a Mr. Maurice Phillips, who, until earlier this year, was the deputy chief inspector of the DHSS's social services inspectorate.

The purpose of Premier Care is to set up a privatised system of registration and inspection. I cannot envisage someone who has been at such a senior level within the DHSS putting his money into a company such as that without knowing that the Government are thinking of having a privatised system not just of care but of registering, monitoring and inspecting. I should like to hear the Minister's response to that point. I can see him shuffling in his seat. I have probably spoken for too long, so I shall finish with one or two points.

I remind the Minister, who is new to his job, that about 20 years ago—around the time when I started in welfare work—the Seebohm report addressed the problem of divided responsibility for policy, resources and co-ordination in social services, and came up with the existing provision of local authority service, the generic departments that we have grown to know and, some of us, to love. The Seebohm report said:

> "The more fragmented the responsibility for the provision of personal social services, the more pronounced these problems become."

The Government have deliberately fragmented the provision of services for the elderly to pave the way for private welfare; it is not accidental. In consequence, they are presiding over a scandalous misuse of huge amounts of public resources which could be directed to people who need to be supported in the community, rather than being used to support those who do not need to be in residential care.

It all comes down to the fact that the Government are sacrificing the interests of elderly people on the altar of their free market ideology. It is a disgrace that there was nothing in the Queen's Speech on Griffiths or community care, and it is appalling that it has taken so long to produce any response. I want to hear some answers tonight.

12.25 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on her position in the ballot; I have tried to achieve a position as high as she has in the ballot on a number of occasions. I have only managed 13th today and I doubt whether we shall get that far, so I am glad to have the opportunity to join in this interesting debate. I look forward to the reply that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will make. In doing so, I pay tribute to the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who helped me several times with matters related to care in the community. I look forward to receiving continuing help from my colleagues in the Department.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South referred to respite care, and highlighted the central question of who has responsibility. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) discussed exactly how well care is provided in the public sector and again asked how responsibility should be determined.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) started well by pointing out the anomalies in care for the elderly, and the fact that the Audit Commission has highlighted some of the perverse incentives. He obviously has experience of work in these matters. However, I was sorry to hear the way in which he developed his argument. He is basically a monopolist. He believes that there should be a monopoly of care and that, as long as the monopolist is provided with a super-abundance of resources, everything will be all right, but my constituents, and members of the recently formed Bolton handicap action group, which I helped to set up, are very dissatisfied at having to depend on a monopoly for their services.

The difficulty with the Griffiths report is that Mr. Griffiths obviously spent too much time talking to the providers, and too little time to the consumers of the services. We need a structure that pays more attention to the needs of those who use the services. The hon. Member for Bristol, South highlighted those points very clearly. Griffiths simply does not pay enough attention to the contribution that the voluntary sector can make. We know from the Audit Commission report that the value placed on care provided by the informal section is about £6,000 million. We need a structure that will harness that enormous contribution, help it to grow and make it fit with the system as a whole.

Unfortunately, there is not time tonight to cover all the work done by the voluntary groups. I shall merely mention some of the points put to me by some of the leading voluntary groups such as MENCAP, the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults, the Spastics Society, RADAR—the Royal Society for Disability and Rehabilitation—and MIND, as well as the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. I shall mention too some of the outstanding contributions made by some of my constituents. One of the people who I would like my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to meet if he has an opportunity to come to my constituency is Mrs. Gibson of Legendre street. Although a single parent—a widow—Mrs. Gibson has adopted one of the most severely handicapped children from the Elizabeth Ashmore home in Bolton. The child is almost wholly paralysed, yet she has been able to take the child into her home and care for the

child in an extraordinary and welcome way. She is a widow, as her husband, who was a haemophiliac, died of AIDS, so she has already had a tragedy in her life.

I should like my hon. and learned Friend to meet Mrs. Cummings of Hough Fold way who has a 20-year-old son, David, who is profoundly handicapped. She faces all the difficulties, which have been mentioned already, of what happens when a child reaches the age of 19 and all the provision of care and education suddenly stops. An ordinary child may well be able to care for himself, but a profoundly handicapped child cannot. Parents may well be growing older and, as the physical size of the child and his demands become greater, the burden of caring becomes greater.

In reflecting on how Griffiths might have considered the problems differently and reached different conclusions, I think that he underestimated the voluntary sector. On page 26 he states:

"this should allow the social services authority to hold the not-for-profit body to account for the proper use of public funds."

Why should the not-for-profit voluntary bodies not hold the social services authority to account for the proper use of public funds? That way it might be interesting to see exactly how much money is available and exactly how well it is being used to provide care. As Mrs. Cummings said to me when I saw her last only last week:

"Only when local health and social services can be directed by a body with legally binding powers to provide services will proper care of the handicapped become a reality."

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for introducing his Bill which is now the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. It is directed at putting a statutory duty on whichever body is to have responsibility to provide these services, not on the basis of discretion, but generally. That is what carers seek.

How should that be done? That is the question that the Government must address. There is no question but that it must be done. Only last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said:

"Everyone agrees that there is a serious problem",

and:

"few people think that the status quo is highly satisfactory." —[*Official Report*, 13 December 1988; Vol. 143 c. 771.]

There are calls for the 1986 Act to be implemented, calls for the Griffiths report to be implemented and calls for more funds. But I suggest that we could pay some regard to the suggestions of the Department of Employment. I refer the House to the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" and what it says about training and enterprise councils.

Enterprise councils are to be formed locally and two thirds of their composition should come from the private sector. They will help to direct a budget of £3,000 million. Each council will have a budget of about £25 million. Therefore, if a local care in the community council were formed in each area, was responsible for administering a budget and consisted predominantly of people from the voluntary sector, they would decide how the money was to be spent. They would hold to account the social services department and the health authority on exactly how they provide care. They would be responsible for harnessing the enormous resources of the voluntary sector to provide care in the form in which it is wanted.

I recommend that the Government should seriously consider setting up local care for the community councils, two thirds of whose members should be representatives from voluntary groups and one third officials from local and health authorities, family practitioner committees, the Departments of Health Social Security and any other relevant official bodies. The chairman of such a council should be an independent person. That council should then bid for the power to direct spending. It should have a life of, say, three years, after which it would have to bid again to have the power to continue. If it could not administer its functions properly, another body could be formed which could bid to do the job. Such a council could take over the powers currently exercised by the joint planning committees, which are made up of local and health authorities.

I do not suppose that such a proposal would be welcomed by official bodies, whose powers would be weakened, but I believe that it would much better serve the interests of the disabled and their hard-pressed carers than the monopoly institutions which presently have that job, and which the Griffiths report calls on to provide the care in a future structure. The Government have been right to hesitate before leaping to take on the Griffiths proposals. That doubt is shared by individual carers, who do not want to be in the hands of any such monopoly. They would rather have the services directed by people with experience of using the voluntary sector rather than just bureaucrats.

The subject of community care has been on everyone's lips for some time—in fact, it goes back 30 years—but to many people its implications are largely unknown. Most people have just a vague idea of the large mental hospitals closing down. For years, community care has been little more than political rhetoric and idealistic policies and has had nothing to do with the realities of ignorance and the neglect of the handicapped and their carers in our society.

The majority of mentally handicapped children and adults have always lived in our society until their parents could no longer cope. Some 70 per cent. of mentally handicapped adults live with their families. That voluntary care, which has been valued at £6,000 million by the Audit Commission, must be increasing year by year. It is clear that the parents are the backbone and the basis of community care. Support for them must be the main task of community care. That support should consist of the provision of respite and day care centres which can properly cater for their requirements.

Community care should mean an end of the need to choose between care by the family and care by the state. It is scandalous that the only way in which a profoundly handicapped person can receive a dowry is by going into an institution for at least six months. That should not be the only way in which a person can gain entry into a neighbourhood network scheme.

When compared with mentally handicapped adults, mentally handicapped children are relatively well catered for, which is simply because all children must receive full-time education. However, when they reach the age of 19, they are suddenly forgotten. It is as though, like normal children, they are considered sufficiently prepared for the outside world and have no need for further care.

I would like to raise the points made to me by the voluntary groups when we have a full debate on community care. I am sure that all the hon. Members who have spoken would like the opportunity of a full debate on

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

this subject. I hope that I can put some of those points in letters to the Minister, if I have not sufficient time to raise them now.

One of the things that worries parents greatly is how to make provision for their children which is not a substitute for state benefits. If someone wins the pools, he does not lose his pension, but if a disabled person receives an inheritance he immediately loses his entitlement to some of his benefits. That is unfair and I hope that that is also addressed by the Government.

Mary Holland of MENCAP has said:

"how we respond to the needs of people who for too long have been denied their rightful place in the community—who for too long have been 'out of sight and out of mind'—will show our true worth as a 'civilised society' approaching the 21st Century."

Our challenge is to find the right structure in which we can harness both the resources of the public sector—at central and local government level—and the enormous resources that can be made available on a voluntary basis."

12.40 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) not only on her success in the ballot for the debate, but on introducing the debate with an outstanding speech that was comprehensive and sincere. It helped the House to identify the many problems associated with community care.

Had my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) been successful in participating in the debate, she would have said a great deal about social security, lodging allowances and so on. That underlines how crucial it is to have a full-scale debate on community care, preferably in Government time. It is a great pity that tonight's debate has underlined the fact that no such full-scale debate has taken place.

I also wish to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) who spoke with considerable authority, as one might expect, given his experience in social services. I know that the House listened carefully to many of the points that he made. The hon. Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) gave outstanding support to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I am particularly grateful that they mentioned that Act in their speeches tonight.

As my hon. Friends have said, we are not without information, research, advice and opinion on this matter. Hon. Members have mentioned the Griffiths report. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will be more forthcoming about that report. Time after time, we have asked his right hon. Friends, including the Prime Minister, to tell us what they think of that report. It was published in March and it is extremely thoughtful.

Months before, when we asked questions about personal social services and community care, we were told that we should wait for the Griffiths report. We did so patiently, but now we are asked to be even more patient in awaiting the Government's response to it. I hope that the Minister will seize the opportunity tonight to tell us precisely what the Government will do about Sir Roy Griffiths' views. Virtually everyone who has spoken tonight has asked for such a response.

We have also heard mention of the 1985 report of the Social Services Select Committee, which contained 101 recommendations, and of the Audit Commission report. My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield rightly reminded us that that report talked of community care being in disarray. All of our concerns about community care find some refuge in almost every section of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act and I am grateful for the references made to it tonight.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent spoke about advocacy. As he knows, that is in the Act. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East spoke about consumers. If ever an Act attempted to reflect the views of consumers and to give them a say in service provision, this was it: its very title uses the word "consultation". Two and a half years on, it is extremely distressing to find that only a modest attempt has been made to implement that Act. Sections 1, 2, 3, 7 and 11—some would say these constitute the meat of the provisions for community care—have still not been implemented by the Government. We are entitled to ask, why not? At the time of the Act's passage, there was a great deal of support for it in both Houses. There still is, but millions of people with disabilities and their carers still wait for its full implementation.

As Christmas approaches, we should think about the problems of community care, if only because 90 per cent. of these people—the elderly, the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill—live in the community. Government funding does not reflect that proportion: quite the reverse. It concentrates on residential care or on the NHS. We certainly want proper funding for the NHS, but on the basis of a clearly identified strategy for community care, which recognises that people are entitled to enjoy independence in the community, properly supported by occupational therapy, the home help service and so on. People should not be driven as a matter of necessity, rather than of choice, into residential care, which may not be in their interests.

How can we ignore, particularly at this time of year, the housing crisis in this country? Housing investment has been cut in real terms by 60 per cent. under this Government. Council house starts are at an all-time low. Housing subsidies have been eroded. The consequences of this have been brought to our attention repeatedly, not least in Scotland by Mr. Laurie Naumann, the director of the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless. His document, called "The First Four Weeks", deals with unemployed homeless young people who know all about lost income support and YTS jobs that do not exist.

We condemn the Government's approach because it offers no clear strategy for community care or for evolving a relationship between the providers and consumers of care.

The Government talk of cost-effectiveness. There is not much evidence even of that, as was clear from the Griffiths and Audit Commission reports. The revolving door syndrome can be seen especially in the discharging of patients from long-stay psychiatric hospitals. There is nothing efficient about that. Section 7 of the 1986 Act makes it possible at least to deal with people who have been in psychiatric hospitals for six months or more. Many of them are sent out into community care that does not exist. Many find themselves in prison, or in places entirely unsuited to their needs.

The Government's policy of running down hospital provision and closing wards and of not providing sufficient bridging funding is not a substitute for proper community care. In many ways, it weakens the concept of community care, as the Opposition understand it. The tragedy is that the Government are not even attempting to identify the problems nationally. Several times I have tabled questions to the former Minister, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), and in reply after reply it appears that central information does not exist. There is no incentive for people to provide local plans.

I realise that time is running short and I am anxious to accommodate the Minister, so I end on this note. The Opposition's attitude to proper provision of community care represents a challenge to poverty, homelessness and neglect. For that reason, we cannot place all our faith in the free market. How can we, when in New York it has produced 30,000 former psychiatric patients on the streets? How can we do that, when we know of the problems that exist in London and in many other parts of Britain? We believe in a policy of mutuality of concern for service provision; in insisting on the rights of the consumer; and in a community care priority that is crying out to be met.

12.50 am

The Minister for Health (Mr. David Mellor: I am glad to follow the courteous speech of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). I too would have liked the House to have had the opportunity of having a longer debate on community care. It is an important issue to which hon. Members on both sides of the House have something to contribute. Although I do not determine the business of the House, I dare say that if the will is there on both Front Benches, it should be possible to have a longer time in which to discuss the matter.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I am genuinely sorry that time was not available for every hon. Member who wished to speak. I could not reasonably have been expected to take any less time than the nine minutes with which I have been left. One or two others might, with advantage, have compressed their remarks a little. If the hon. Lady has a point to make, I shall be happy to accept an intervention in my speech.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The same goes for the hon. Gentleman. If they would allow me to get into my stride for a minute or two, I should be happy to give way to them. People who stay up until 1 am are entitled to have their say.

I have noted the points made in the debate. Some common threads ran through the speeches with which I had no difficulty agreeing, but honesty compels me to say that I cannot fully endorse some comments by Opposition Members. As I shall show, there has been a formidable underestimate of the additional resources that have flowed into community care during the past decade.

As one of those who find a good deal of the argument in Sir Roy Griffiths' report most compelling, it saddens me that those who are troubled about the emphasis that he places on local authority provision base their objections on the fact that some local authorities cannot recognise that the proper provision of community care must be a fair balance between the individual carers—about whom the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) had some important words to say—and local authority provision. In my constituency, I have always worked closely with my local social services department, and I know the good work that is done in the country. But we should not forget the voluntary and private sectors.

The attacks on the private sector by the hon. Lady and by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) were unconvincing and redolent of another age, but they provide good ammunition for those who say that the voluntary and private sectors would not get a fair judgment if Sir Roy Griffiths' analysis were followed. I am reluctant to arrive at that conclusion, but it behoves all of us to take off our ideological blinkers, look at the situation in the round and recognise that good community care will be a balanced contribution from a range of sources.

Mrs. Mahon: My point concerns hostel charges and the change from board and lodging to housing benefit which could mean a 30 per cent. cut in provision. Will the Minister give us a sign of future funding arrangements and a guarantee that we shall not see a cut in funding to the valuable hostel services, particularly women's refuges?

Mr. Mellor: I am glad that the hon. Lady has registered that point, which largely concerns the Department of Social Security. I shall ensure that she receives a full answer either from me or from my colleague at the Department of Social Security.

It is clear that there has been a dramatic increase in community care resources. For instance, when the National Audit Office considered the period 1976-77 to 1984-85, it indicated that there had been an 18 per cent. real terms increase in expenditure on services for the elderly, the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the physically disabled. The personal social services provision or 1989-90, which has just been established, has been set at £3·3 billion. That is over 10 per cent. more than was provided in the 1988-89 settlement and so allows for considerable growth, even discounting inflation. Between 1983-84 and 1987-88, local authorities, which have always had a crucial role to play, increased their expenditure by more than 20 per cent. in real terms.

We must be careful not to underestimate the extent of the additional provision that we have seen in practical terms. Many of us are concerned about mental handicap because few of us do not feel touched by those problems. The hospital population fell by about 15,000 between 1976 and 1986, but the number of day care and residential places in the community rose by over 50 per cent. more than that. There were over 26,000 additional places, which is a sign of the growth in provision that we all want to see.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South rightly attacked Victorian institutions with large wards. Obviously there will continue to be a need for various kinds of institutions, but community care——

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Lady took over 20 minutes, although I do not blame her for doing so. She is entitled to have her say, but I should like to say a few things myself.

Similarly, when one considers mental illness, between 1976 and 1986, the number of residential care places almost doubled and places in day centres increased by almost two thirds.

[Mr. Mellor]

It has been pointed out that the number of people over the age of 85 will grow. Our figures suggest that the number will more than double by the year 2011. Obviously there is a formidable task ahead of us and we will be better equipped to meet it if there is genuine partnership between national and local government. Local government is full of people who recognise the need for good voluntary activity and that the private sector can play its part. If one cuts away some of the ideological overlay in the speech of the hon. Member for Wakefield, one sees that there was at the heart of it a point that few of us can deny—that there is a perverse incentive that makes it easier for people to go into residential care than to stay in the community. I regret that. It is not helpful and I note that almost everyone who has looked at community care has denounced it and has asked for a proper gatekeeper.

I am sure that there are certain truths that all of us who work in the community in a practical way—as Members of Parliament do—cannot deny. One of them is that people do not want to go into institutions. They go into them as a last resort. Central to any reshaping of community care, which cannot be delayed for long, is a recognition that domiciliary services will have to expand and we will have to look far more carefully at the basis on which people enter long-term care which most people would not enter it there were the opportunity to stay in the community. It is not simply a matter of keeping people in the community. We must also consider retraining people to return to the community. There is a good record of that around the country and we must build on it.

I accept that in closing the large institutions we must not consign patients to the wind or breeze of fortune. There must be adequate provision for them in the community. That provision is being built up. I have had the privilege to visit many marvellous projects established to satisfy that provision. We want more of them, and I believe that between us we should be able to find the resources to make that possible.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation

1 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I hope that the House agrees that it is important to raise the question of energy efficiency and conservation now. It may not be an appropriate time of day to raise the matter, but it is an appropriate time in the political debate to raise it.

I hope that this debate will be spared deep ideological divisions, although there are of course important questions and legitimate differences about public expenditure and what resources should be devoted to such matters. But the timing of this short debate is important. There is widespread public concern about the global environment—issues such as the greenhouse effect and the general increase in pollution levels. People are also worried about adverse climatic effects, the potential increase in sea levels, deforestation and desertification of various parts of the globe. Increased energy efficiency and conservation have an important part to play in those debates.

The Prime Minister, if not the Secretary of State for the Environment, has said she has an interest in the subject. That is right and proper. However, the Prime Minister's speech to the Royal Society raised the suspicion among the cynics that she is more interested in arguing a positive case for nuclear power than in protecting the environment. She is more interested in promoting the interests of the nuclear industry and in trying to stymie future developments in coal-fired stations.

I am not a cynic and I take all the statements of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment at face value. Both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have at least increased public interest and concern about conservation and the environment.

It is also important that we should consider energy efficiency and conservation now—and this will not be lost on the Minister—because there is the small matter of the Electricity Bill before the House. Hon. Members will be able to voice their concerns in the debates on that Bill. The Bill provides an opportunity for people to argue an alternative to the nuclear route. Clearly we will have the opportunity in the debates on the Electricity Bill to consider an alternative that will provide greater value for money for the industry, the public sector and for private domestic users. That alternative can be achieved if we increase the amount of resources that we devote to energy conservation and efficiency.

It is common knowledge that many academic and professional bodies are now interested in conservation and the environment and have published reports and general information about it. The Rocky Mountain Institute, whose expertise is well known, took the view in a recently published report that

> "The key to ameliorating future climatic warming caused by the combustion of fossil fuels is to improve the efficiency of energy usage."

That sums up the view of many academics, who have concluded that investment in energy efficiency is, pound for pound, seven times more effective in abating global warming than is nuclear power. There is nothing new about that—many academic, professional and pressure groups take the same view.

Although the Select Committee on the Environment's recent report is essentially concerned with air pollution, it nevertheless reaches an interesting conclusion in respect of energy conservation:

"However, if the world wants light, heat and energy in constant and increasing supply, the choice might resolve itself between a source which is deliberately and constantly poisoning the atmosphere and one whose misadventure would have catastrophic global results . . . but an alternative would be energy conservation and reduction in demand."

That is an important and significant finding.

What will reduced demand mean? The House will know that the European Community has recently produced its own estimates. It came to the conclusion that if a saving of 1 per cent. per annum in energy usage can be achieved, it will reduce sulphur dioxide emissions by the staggering figure of 125,000 tonnes annually, and those of nitric oxide by 200,000 tonnes, in addition to achieving significant reductions in carbon dioxide levels.

The Minister will know that the European Community has set a target reduction of 20 per cent. over the period 1983-95. That is a minimum, but it is clearly also achievable, and it provides the context for our debate and sets down what is achievable by all member states over that period.

There are worries in the minds of many people about recent trends in Government policy on efficiency and conservation. As evidence of the Government's awareness of the situation, I quote the former Secretary of State for Energy:

"When I came into office in 1983, I judged that Britain was down at the bottom of the international energy efficiency league. By the end of the decade I want the world to judge that we are at the top."

Some of the actions following upon that statement served to confirm that the Government were taking the matter fairly seriously. In 1983, the then Secretary of State began with an inherited budget of about £11·8 million. By 1986-87, the budget had increased to £25 million. There was also the monergy scheme, and at one stage about 2,000 events were sponsored by the Energy Efficiency Office. There were even, at the last count, 43 breakfasts! In all seriousness, they made the point to business men; those to whom I spoke felt that they had provided a useful exchange of information and had a real purpose. So a certain amount of energy was expended by the former Secretary of State himself.

The budget for the Energy Efficiency Office has now been cut to £15 million, and it has been suggested that it will be cut further. The number of staff has also been cut since the heyday of nearly 100 people, and the Civil Service grades of those involved seem to be getting lower. There used to be at least five grade IV civil servants.

Home insulation grants are arguably the most practical way in which people can contribute to energy efficiency. Increased insulation schemes lead not only to financial savings but to warmer homes, which is particularly important for elderly people at this time of year. The home improvement grant scheme was introduced in 1978 and expanded in 1984: the budget was increased to £35 million and there was a 90 per cent. allowance for supplementary benefit claimants. By 1987 all but the supplementary benefit scheme had been abolished. I know that most homes now have some insulation, but what percentage have the Government's recommended 6 in of insulation in their lofts? What I have read suggests that the figure could be as low as 15 per cent.

The industrial energy survey schemes set in train by the Government recently had benefits transcending the protection of the environment. They increased the competitiveness of businesses that engaged in them, providing for 50-50 cost sharing for industry, commerce and public sector buildings when energy-saving schemes were being considered. Up to £10,000 of grant was also available for the more extensive schemes, and the Department of Energy claimed that when they were in full swing some £35 could be saved for every £1 invested. If that was so, why did the Department decide to abolish the scheme this year?

There are also worries about the planned cutbacks in the advertising budget. The budget for getting the energy message across was formerly £7 million; what is it to be in the years to come? Some people fear that it will be cut fairly drastically. Then there is the home energy advice scheme. A draft European Community directive entitled "Energy Information in Buildings" makes a major contribution to information about the energy costs of new homes, and tells domestic consumers how to improve their energy efficiency. Some pressure groups think that the United Kingdom blocked the scheme, or at least was not enthusiastic about it, and I would be interested to hear whether that contributed to the delaying of the directive.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): Is the hon. Gentleman talking about a compulsory energy audit?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am talking about what I understand to be an EEC draft directive called "Energy Information in Buildings", but I understand that it is basically concerned with domestic energy audits.

There are other measures that the Government formerly promoted and in which they now seem less interested—for instance, the monitoring and targeting of specific industries, and assistance to energy managers, which seems less readily available than it was. The Department also seems to be promoting fewer building demonstration schemes. The Department of Energy is apparently becoming increasingly uninterested in this important matter.

In 1985 the Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales set minimum standards. It said that one staff member should be employed for every £1 million spent on fuel and that 10 per cent. of revenue should be reinvested in capital improvements. How many councils and Government Departments have achieved that target, or are making any effort to do so? The target figure for savings was formerly £7 billion per annum. What is that target now? Does the Minister have any information about the EEC target by 1995? All these important questions need to be answered.

The Government are missing opportunities in both public and private sector housing. Building controls and standards should be tightened. The Department insists on a U-value—a measure of energy efficiency, and the lower the figure the better the value—of 0·45. I am told that many of the materials that are being used in the construction industry do not meet that standard. Do the Government believe that there is adequate policing of the regulations? There is an argument for raising the standard of the U-value to at least 0·35, a standard that has been adopted by other EEC countries whose circumstances are similar to ours. What pressure do the Government intend

[Mr. Kirkwood]

to bring to bear to make sure that tougher steps are taken to ensure that tighter control and higher standards are achieved?

Much could be achieved. That has been demonstrated by the Milton Keynes energy unit. It has promoted eight schemes that have saved £125,000 a week. Other Milton Keynes projects include solar power cells, chemical systems and a 300-acre energy park. When the Minister visited Milton Keynes he referred to the need to spread to Wigan, Wick and Walthamstow the lessons that had been learnt at Milton Keynes. I agree with him, but what has he done since he made that important and useful speech to ensure that the message has been spread? The recent draft EEC directive "Energy Information in Buildings" will be useful in that connection.

The March consultative group that produced a report for the EEC said that up to 15 to 20 per cent. could be saved in the north-west by using tried and tested techniques—nothing new, or too fancy or technological—that are already available in the market. The measures that they outlined included monitoring, targeting, better housekeeping, better design and better equipment. The March consultative group came to the conclusion that an 8 per cent. reduction in energy use could be achieved by ordinary householders becoming more energy efficient by installing hot water tank insulation, loft insulation and cavity wall insulation, draft proofing, double glazing, condensing boilers and heating controls. The Government, local authorities and housing associations should be trumpeting these messages from the rooftops.

There have been recent press reports, including one in *The Guardian*, about the Treasury making it more difficult for the National Health Service to make full use of energy-efficient systems, thereby saving taxpayers' money. In the context of the United Kingdom as a whole, the energy bill could be reduced by £4 billion to £5 billion a year if £8 billion to £9 billion were spent on energy conservation measures. I acknowledge that that is a very large figure, and I do not expect the Minister to say that he can immediately produce such a huge sum of money, but there are positive directions in which he could move. The £3 billion provided in the Electricity Bill to featherbed the nuclear industry could be put to better use, but no doubt we shall have the opportunity to debate that in the coming weeks as the Electricity Bill completes its passage through the House.

When the Prime Minister spoke at the Milton Keynes energy week, I was disturbed that she spoke about savings and reductions of only £7 billion out of £35 billion total energy expenditure. That was the original saving hoped for in energy efficiency. That aim has been improved by the Secretary of State, who said that we can now save only £8 billion out of a total expenditure of £39 billion. That is a very complacent target. The Government are not doing enough to achieve better savings.

The Government should set rigorous targets which they should prosecute with a great deal more vigour. They have to deploy resources and produce finance to achieve them. The standards set by statute for buildings, appliances, plant and methods of transport could be improved and "least cost" planning for all Government Departments should be established. Contract energy management, which is a system of third party financing, and energy service companies to provide financing should be encouraged. Information needs to be more widely available at domestic level about running costs through the labelling of appliances. Resources for domestic and industrial efficiency and conservation procedures should be made available throughout the United Kingdom. And, against that background, we still have to remember the importance of the global perspective.

The Secretary of State has said that energy conservation cannot be imposed on an unwilling public; but there is no evidence that the public is unwilling to have conservation and efficiency forced upon it. There may be a lack of individual and collective finance, a degree of ignorance or lack of awareness, but people are certainly not unwilling. The Government have a duty to protect the environment. If they did that by promoting energy conservation and efficiency more vigorously, that would benefit industry, consumers and the public sector and would even make room for further tax cuts if the savings proved to be as extensive as I hoped they might be.

The Electricity Bill provides an opportunity to make efficiency and conservation of energy a primary aim in industry. If the Prime Minister wants to be taken seriously as being glad to be green or being concerned about prudent housekeeping, she will need to invest to achieve better long-term results in this important sector of public expenditure.

1.22 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): We owe the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) a debt of gratitude for raising the subject for debate. I was sad to hear his comments about the Prime Minister. I believe that when a convert is found one should be nice to them, and it does no good at all to snub them. That applies as much to a marginal voter as it does to a marginal Prime Minister. Having said that, everything else the hon. Gentleman said made sound sense.

The way to achieve energy efficiency and conservation is not to waste things. It is that simple. Many years ago during the war, there were campaigns to save one thing or another because there were no resources to spare. Now energy resources are abundant. They are even over-abundant allowing for the way that we use them. Energy is over-used because it is cheap, and therefore it is wasted. If we do not waste it and we use less of it we shall benefit. Let us start at the bottom, in the home. We should insulate, double-glaze and draught-proof the home. We should lag the hot water tank and check the appliances that we buy to find out how much electricity they use. Those tremendously easy and simple methods cost very little and pay back in terms of power bills within six months to two years.

We follow the United States in many things, including fast food. It has energy audits as a matter of course. All its major utilities are required by its Energy Act to offer an audit to each house to see what can be done cheaply to make it draught-proof, warmer and, therefore, cheaper to run for the householder. It makes sense and I suspect that sooner or later we shall introduce such a system. If a utility could save the cost of a new power station, it would be worth making the saving and selling a little less energy.

One of our problems is that the newspapers are full of advertisements from the excellent salesmen of gas or electricity trying to sell more and more. That may mean

producing one more power station at a gigantic cost to supply a marginal unit of electricity. The United States has realised that resources are finite and is working on that basis. Surely we should do that and we would be none the worse for it. We have already pointed the way.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) was the Secretary of State for Energy we started the monergy campaign. It was designed to save a fair proportion of the energy used. Ultimately, we did not save a great deal. In percentage terms we saved 1 per cent. That might not seem to be much but it is equivalent to the output of three Sizewells. It was achieved at a cost to the taxpayer of less than the cost of the public inquiry into the last Sizewell station. Lagging jackets on the 10 million uninsulated water tanks in Britain would save the cost of a Hinkley Point C, which is not too far from my constituency or yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If one can save the cost of a new utility, irrespective of the arguments as to whether it should be coal, nuclear or hydro, the saving must make sense. The United States Energy Act 1978 forces electricity and gas utilities to provide free energy audits to their consumers, provide loans and give advice on how to save energy. Within two years, insulation in Britain could save 5 per cent. of our energy. Although the percentage seems small, it is actually a vast figure.

Another system which is much talked of but which no one really understands—rather like proportional representation—is combined heat and power. In that system one does not waste, as we do at present, more power in cooling off the generating stations than is produced for the grid. One of the oddities of life is that we are so profligate with power that we waste more than we produce. That is illogical. I am sorry to have to quote figures but about 40 per cent. of our final energy demand is used as petrol or diesel for vehicles. Much of the pollution in our ever-more congested streets is ejected at what I call "pushchair level". It does vast damage to youngsters and brings no pleasure to the rest of us. It is time we started to give priority to other forms of transport. The most illogical thing in London is to see a queue of cars entering town between 8·30 am and 9·30 am each containing one person and taking up a vast amount of space. Probably all the drivers in a length of road could be fitted into one omnibus. That may not be convenient, but it would be a saving of a finite resource, which is what we should be looking towards.

I do not seek to detain the House at this hour. However, many of us, irrespective of our views on the type of generation, would agree that anything that saves energy saves money. If one can save some cash, one would be a welcome and popular friend, not least to one's electorate.

Windmills work and pollute nothing. They are excellent producers of clean energy in a quantity that is easy to assimilate and distribute locally. Water wheels have worked for centuries. We abandoned them because of the idleness of our civilisation but they have a sensible and logical use. Tidal power works and is clean and infinitely renewable. In my constituency, the tide rises and falls 36 ft twice a day, but we have no way of harnessing that power. When we consider harnessing it in barrages, there is a veritable barrage of protest from environmental interests, which say that terrible things will happen to wading birds. I feel sorry for wading birds, but I suspect that they will find another place to wade. Surely it is sensible to begin to consider this clean form of energy and try to use it, not to the exclusion of other sources but as well as them. Further alternative sources are sunlight and geothermal hot water.

If we tried a little tenderness with the environment instead of using the most expensive and pollutant forms of energy and, in our own small way, tried to save a little here and there, we would save much money and much of our environment for future generations.

1.30 am

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am not sure that I want to follow the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) down all the avenues that they travelled. It would make the debate unnecessarily wide if I spoke about the greenhouse effect and renewable sources of energy, which are worth a debate on their own.

I shall confine my remarks to a fairly narrow definition of energy efficiency and conservation and the problems, that were partly dealt with by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, concerning the Government's attitude to them. The debate has spread to topics mentioned by the Prime Minister in her Royal Society speech, which was a broad commitment to conservation and looking after the global environment. It did not necessarily imply a commitment to policies that might bring that about in the lifetime of her Government.

I have taken the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office, but I am not sure that I am working from the same figures as the hon. Gentleman. My figures come from a written answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 9 December and show a cut in the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office from £26 million in 1986-87 to £24·5 million in the year ending last April and to £20·8 million for the current financial year. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire may have been referring to a prospective cut in the next financial year, but perhaps the Minister will say a little more about that and justify a cut of almost 80 per cent. in the budget, if the figure of £15 million being projected for the 1989-90 budget is correct. My figures certainly show a major cut from £26 million to £20 million over the past two years, which is extremely serious, against which the Government's commitment to conservation and efficiency must be judged.

One of the reasons why it gives me a certain amount of pleasure, even at this late hour, to be debating this topic is that being the hon. Member for Cardiff, West it is possible for me to say that much useful work has been done by Cardiff over the three years since it became the first energy action city in the United Kingdom by a combination of local authority and Government initiative. It has been an extremely good and well-run programme, which has been reasonably well funded by a mixture of Government and local authority funding, combined with much enthusiasm. There are 110,000 dwellings in Cardiff, and almost 20,000 have been fitted with home insulation and draught-proofing under the neighbourhood energy action programme. That sounds like a lot, but much remains to be done, although Cardiff is probably in the lead of most middle-sized United Kingdom cities in breaking the back of the problem.

The hon. Member for Devon, North mentioned the vast number of domestic hot water tanks that remain to be

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

insulated and the many roofs that need to be brought up to modern insulation standards. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, probably three quarters of British homes now have roof insulation, but only a small number have the 6 in roof insulation that is recommended by the Government and which will become mandatory for house building from April next year. The Minister may say something about that. The hon. Gentleman's figure of 15 per cent. would coincide with my estimate of the proportion of the total United Kingdom housing stock that currently has 6 in insulation.

I should like the Minister to say when he can reasonably expect 50 per cent. of houses in the United Kingdom to be insulated to the 6 in standard. When does he expect 25 per cent. or 75 per cent. of United Kingdom houses to be insulated to the 6 in standard? Does he expect that to be achieved within 10 years, 25 years, or is that a totally unrealistic target, given his budget for energy efficiency work?

Cardiff is not the only energy action city. There are many. There are five in Wales alone. I do not know the figure for the United Kingdom. Neighbourhood insulation schemes are run by a non-profit-making company in Newcastle, Neighbourhood Energy Action, and a good outfit it is. The problem is that a major catastrophe has engulfed neighbourhood energy action programmes up and down the land. I do not think that I am exaggerating —that is as I understand it from people working in the sector.

By and large, programmes will grind to a halt. They cannot cope with the change from community programme funding to employment training funding. Apart from Hull, most cities are not able to find volunteers under the current rules for benefit payment. Obviously, the major impulse for neighbourhood energy action insulation programmes has not come just from householders wanting insulation, and wanting insulation done on the cheap. It has been a by-product of the benefit system and of high unemployment. It is certainly now running into the sand. By and large, people are not willing to operate just for benefits-plus.

The previous scheme under community programme rules, whereby people got £20 a day for three days' work was not wildly popular, but it was not too bad. Most schemes are running into heavy weather. The phrase "grinding to a halt" is not an exaggeration, although I am told that Hull is an exception. I hope that the Minister will say something about that.

If the benefits-plus system is not working for the people who operate energy insulation schemes, we must think of something else, otherwise the momentum and the skills that have been built up among supervisory and estimating staff and in the production of insulation material will reach a serious crisis.

We need to consider what we must do about the elderly. The elderly are major beneficiaries of neighbourhood energy action schemes. They are the most vulnerable group. In general, they spend about twice as much of their weekly income on heating in the winter as the population in general spend. On average, pensioners spend about 15 per cent. of their weekly income on heating. The figure is much higher for those who do not have gas central heating. They would spend about 20 per cent., maybe even more. It is not unknown for pensioners to spend 25 per cent. of their weekly income on heating. They hit a severe crisis if there is a really cold winter. In January and February, pensioners go through an extremely difficult time. The phenomenon is almost uniquely British.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned building standards, which are extremely important, and discussed what we should do with buildings erected before the first world war to completely different insulation standards and to buildings built since then but with very poor cavity wall insulation or none at all. Such buildings are frequently inhabited by pensioners, who find it extremely expensive to keep warm in them. Hypothermia among the elderly is a largely British phenomenon. It is not found in Scandinavia, where building standards are much higher and where pensions are higher in relation to the cost of fuel. In Britain, the death rate shoots up in winter. Objective sources estimate that an additional 15,000 to 20,000 winter deaths occur in Britain. They do not occur in Germany, Scandinavia or Holland because they are caused by a combination of poor building standards, inadequate pensions and high fuel prices. Cot deaths, too, may be related, but I shall confine my remarks to hypothermia, which is an almost uniquely British disease.

The Government do not yet seem to have adopted with any enthusiasm the EEC proposals under which it is hoped to introduce trials for an energy labelling scheme for houses in Cardiff just before Christmas. The scheme is to be conducted on a voluntary basis and in Cardiff alone. We need to know whether the Government are willing to consider introducing such arrangements. In Denmark an energy surveyor has to affix ratings to houses so that people know whether they are getting an energy-efficient house.

Such a scheme would probably be desirable in this country. We have a history of voluntary arrangements in this country, but when a crisis hits we opt for intervention, and perhaps the time has come for the Government to introduce a scheme for labelling houses—a kind of MOT test of their ability to retain heat or to be heated to a reasonable, civilised standard without costing the earth. A large number of small houses are still built without a central heating system being installed. Heating is supposed to be added by the occupier. Nothing in the building regulations for England and Wales—Scotland is different —says that an adequate heating system must be installed when a house is built, which is a major omission. I hope that the Minister will touch on at least some of the topics that I have raised.

1.42 am

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): Even at this rather late hour, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for raising this important subject. I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) for participating in the debate, which gives me an opportunity to reaffirm in strong terms—very strong terms—the Government's commitment to energy efficiency. It is a firm commitment, which has been demonstrated in a range of effective programmes; it has produced results and we intend to build on it in the future.

I hope that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will accept that the commitment of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to energy efficiency is genuine. The hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend may not agree about everything, but I am sure that he would accept that she always speaks with commitment and conviction.

I hope that I do not need to spend too much time on the reasons for being committed to energy efficiency, many of which have already been mentioned. The primary reason is straightforward and economic. It resides in the extent of the opportunities for energy efficiency improvement. The size of the national energy bill, some £38 billion a year, and of the estimated savings, nearly £8 billion a year, is staggering. In industry and commerce alone, the total expenditure on energy last year was nearly £10 billion, which suggest that a savings potential of nearly £2 billion is achievable. Much of that can be achieved simply through low-cost, good housekeeping measures, and the rest by investment and good pay-back periods.

The narrow economic argument is not the only reason for being interested in energy efficiency, as all hon. Members who have taken part in the debate have said. Another particularly important and topical issue is the environmental consequences, and clearly energy efficiency measures which help to minimise these consequences must be part of an overall package of measures to deal with these problems.

There are wider benefits relating to energy efficiency and perhaps I may enumerate some. Energy efficiency provides a valuable insurance policy against possible upsets on the supply side. It helps make the best possible use of our indigenous resources, leads to better growth and competitiveness, helps to create jobs, and brings social benefits in improving living conditions, especially for older and low income groups. However we consider this, there are no shortage of good reasons for taking energy efficiency seriously, and the Government do precisely that.

In the domestic sector the Energy Efficiency Office has done much to build up an awareness of the importance of energy efficiency in the home through its publicity programmes. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was generous enough to refer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) when he was Secretary of State for Energy. We have provided consumers with practical information on how to save money by saving energy and we have worked with others—recently, I took an initiative with building societies—to reinforce this message.

We have been giving special attention to the problems of pensioners and low-income households. We have supported the development of over 450 community insulation projects which install draught proofing and loft insulation for people who would find it difficult to take these measures themselves. Over 500,000 homes have been treated under this scheme.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West raised his concern about the translation of the community programme to the adult training programme. The Training Commission and my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Employment are directing themselves to this matter.

Under the homes insulation scheme operated by the Department of the Environment and the territorial departments, the Government have helped around 3·5 million people to install loft insulation, which over 90 per cent. of homes now have. This scheme has recently targeted on low-income householders to ensure that help goes to those who need it most.

The hon. Gentleman asked some detailed questions, and I am assured that these matters are for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment; I shall ensure that they receive copies of his points, to which I am sure they will reply.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister's point about the number of homes that already have loft insulation is valid. The problem is that complacency has frequently set in among householders who have their 1 in or 2 in of insulation, which was all that was recommended 10 or 15 years ago. Now that the Government have decided to go for 6 in of insulation as a recommended standard, it seems time to stir the pot again and tell all those householders who think, "Loft insulation, we've got it," that it is time to have another look to see if they should increase it.

Mr. Morrison: If I gave the impression that I was complacent, that was not my intention. There is scope for improvement in every aspect, principally by the consumer.

We operate a range of programmes aimed at industry and commerce. The monitoring and targeting programme aims to develop energy management systems for 40 sectors of industry and commerce. Twenty-five such systems have been developed already, and have been installed on some 600 sites. They are producing savings averaging around 10 per cent. in the companies that install them, and total savings from this scheme amount to nearly £100 million.

The demonstrations programme aims to help new energy efficiency technologies get into the market place. More than 350 projects have been supported and savings amount to nearly £200 million.

Our research and development programme aims to help innovation by developing new energy efficiency technologies. One hundred and twenty-nine projects have been supported of many different types, including industrial plant and process and building services and design. However, our main objective is to get relevant advice direct to the consumer, which means activity in the regions through our network of regional energy efficiency officers. They help market our schemes, set up seminars and workshops, visit major energy users and point them towards sources of advice and practical help. In short, they bring the energy efficiency message home to those who can most benefit from it. We shall be providing our regional offices with more resources and better support in the future.

The programmes of the Energy Efficiency Office can be judged by their direct result. As I have already said, more than 500,000 low-income households have been treated under community insulation projects. Savings of nearly £100 million per year are being made through the monitoring and targeting programme, and savings of nearly £200 million per year are being achieved through the efficiency demonstration scheme. Furthermore, savings of more than £200 million per year have been identified through the former energy efficiency survey scheme.

Overall, therefore, the savings attributable to the activities of the Energy Efficiency Office amount to more than £500 million a year, and more than 4 million consumers have been directly helped by our programme. Far from being insignificant, the resources devoted to

[Mr. Morrison]

energy efficiency by the Government have been considerable, and they have risen substantially since 1983. Taking account of direct expenditure by the Energy Efficiency Office, the homes insulation scheme and community insulation projects, some £42 million in total was spent in 1983-84, while in 1987-88 expenditure on those programmes had doubled. The total spent in that year was some £84 million. To be honest, that compares with very much less when the Labour Government left office in 1979.

On a wider economic basis, the results are also very impressive. Despite the considerable fall in energy prices since 1983, there was a 7 per cent. improvement—worth more than £2 billion—in the efficiency with which energy was used across the economy between 1983 and 1987. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was concerned about the rate of improvement, and I can tell him that, in the United Kindom, which was previously well below the European average, it is now twice that average.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North referred to the energy audit. We are opposed to what the Commission was proposing as a draft directive; I was at that Council. We were opposed to it because there are no sanctions, so it would be ineffective, and it would require the householder to pay an average bill of about £200. I do not believe that that would be either acceptable or desirable in the way that it is presently proposed.

The Energy Efficiency Office has succeeded in establishing energy efficiency as a key issue, and raising awareness of its importance among consumers. Against that background, we have been considering where we can continue to be most effective. I hope that all hon. Members will agree that there is simply no point in spending taxpayers' money unnecessarily to subsidise people to do what they already know is in their interest.

Mr. Speller: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for making a valid point about how much the Government have tried to do over the past years to encourage people to use energy efficiently in their homes. However, I have yet to see any sign of the gas or the electricity authorities showing an interest in reducing the demand for their products. I understand the economic illogic of that, but I have yet to see them saying that they would like to promote energy efficiency to the individual housewife.

Mr. Morrison: I think that my hon. Friend is perhaps less than fair to the gas and electricity industries—I shall deal specifically with the electricity industry in a moment. In my travels over the past 18 months, I have seen both industries running competitions to promote precisely what he and I would like to see—energy efficiency. I do not believe that my hon. Friend has given a totally fair critique of the industries, but no doubt they will read this debate carefully and pay attention to what my hon. Friend has said.

I hope that all hon. Members would agree that there is no point spending taxpayers' money unnecessarily to subsidise people to do what they already know is in their own interests. Therefore, we must consider carefully what the Government do to ensure that everything is properly directed. That is the background to the review, the results of which were announced in June.

The review concluded, among other things, that, since awareness of the need for energy efficiency was now fairly high, there is now less need than in the past for high-profile advertising programmes, expensive razzmatazz and the breakfasts to which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred.

Mr. Kirkwood: I was never invited to one.

Mr. Morrison: Nor was I.

Hence, the case for large amounts of expenditure in this area now seems less compelling.

It is that firm base of achievement that allows us to move forward to a new phase in our activities. In that new phase, the emphasis will be on targeting key areas of energy use, and offering specific advice and technical support. We shall be developing new schemes with that objective.

One aspect of targeting means local delivery in response to local needs. In the new phase, much more attention will therefore be given to the work of the regional energy efficiency officers. We will be strengthening the financial and advisory support available to them, allowing them to offer a better service to industry and commerce in their regions.

One example of the more targeted approach to which we are moving, is the recent "Heat is on" campaign aimed specifically at three major energy-using sectors—chemicals, ceramics and metal. Those three sectors alone account for around half of industrial energy use, and we have tried to bring together the advice and support the EEO can offer from its various programmes to help consumers in those sectors. Meanwhile, other important work continues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North referred to combined heat and power and I heartily agree with him about its potential importance. My hon. Friend will be aware that the Government have provided strong support and encouragement for the development and application of economic CHP technology.

The Energy Efficiency Office has supported 25 research, development and demonstration projects featuring CHP plant in industry, buildings and communal heating schemes. We have also provided substantial funding towards studies to evaluate the feasibility of citywide combined heat and power district heating.

I believe that privatisation of the electricity industry will provide growing opportunities for private generation, including CHP. Our aim is to ensure that all economic sources of electricity supply will have fair access to the market.

For the first time independent generators will be able to compete on an equal footing with the two major generating companies being created from the CEGB. After privatisation the Director General of Electricity Supply will be able to investigate anti-competitive practices, and the privatised companies will also be subject to general competition law.

The Government will therefore be fulfilling their proper role—of providing fair market conditions. The CHP producers will be able to compete freely with other forms of power generation. The future of CHP will then depend not on further public funding but on whether it can compete successfully. I have every confidence that it will be able to do so. In view of its high thermal efficiency and

versatility to which my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North referred, CHP will be well placed to take every advantage of the new opportunities.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West was concerned about electricity privatisation. In our proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, we have taken full account of the need for energy efficiency while balancing it against the primary objective of introducing competition and private sector disciplines.

I do not believe that it would be right to require the industry to subsidise energy efficiency on the part of its consumers. That would be an unwelcome return to over-regulation, and it would force the industry to act uncommercially, so undermining the key objectives of privatisation.

What we have done in the Bill, however, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire knows, is to require the Director General of Electricity Supply to promote the efficient use of electricity, and we intend, in the licence, to insist that the industry tells the consumer how best to pursue this objective. I think that that answers the point made my my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North.

Turning to the greenhouse effect, the need to maintain sustainable economic development while protecting our natural environment is one of the most important challenges facing the world today, and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire is right to refer to the relevance of the greenhouse effect to our debate. However, we have to see this issue in a wider perspective. Fossil fuel burn is one important producer of carbon dioxide emissions and so contributes to the greenhouse effect, but other gases in the atmosphere also contribute.

At the same time, it has to be said that the United Kingdo.n accounts for only around 3 per cent. of world carbon dioxide emissions, and the problems are as yet imperfectly understood.

The time scales of the exact effect on world climate patterns and the possible rise in sea levels are uncertain. The United Kingdom will continue to play its full part in reducing these uncertainties as quickly as possible through co-ordinated international research. The Government will take whatever action is shown to be necessary as our understanding develops, but I also accept that we need to take action now where it is sensible to do so. It is clear that there is no single, simple solution, whether in energy efficiency or in nuclear power, but it is also clear that both these things have their part to play.

The Government certainly recognise the links between energy efficiency and the environment. All means of producing energy have some environmental consequences, and energy efficiency helps keep them to a minimum. That is one good reason among many for promoting energy efficiency.

We have had a useful debate, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising this subject. I hope I have also been able to demonstrate the Government's full-hearted commitment to energy efficiency. The fact is that we have provided much more support for energy efficiency than any previous Government. And we have not simply thrown money indiscriminately at the problem. Our programmes have been built up carefully to ensure the maximum effectiveness and impact. We have an excellent record of achievement, and we are building on that firm basis to target our activities even more effectively.

Our programmes have directly benefited industry and commerce, low-income consumers and old-age pensioners, as well as bringing wider social and environmental advantages. This is a record of which the Government can be justly proud, and I commend it to the House.

Egg Industry

2 am

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I welcome to the debate the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department with responsibility for the subject we are to discuss.

Contrary to some reports, I have at no time been lobbied by the National Farmers Union or by any producer organisations connected with the egg or poultry industries. I also want to make it plain that I have never sought, publicly or privately, the resignation of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), whose services to the Department of Health I much admired and supported.

I welcome the speedy reaction of Ministers and the open and responsible action they are seeking to take. Only a fortnight ago, I rolled out of bed at 7 am and groaned as I heard the radio report of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's remarks. I stopped an hour later in the Cotswolds for breakfast and appreciated the extent of the worry that had been caused to housewives. I realised what a problem we had on our hands. But no one could have foreseen the rapidity with which it developed or the size that it assumed.

The test of the measures announced by the Government is whether they will restore the housewife's confidence in eggs. Anything else that we do for producers is merely applying sticking plaster. The test must be whether we are doing enough to restore the confidence of the housewife. I wish to resolve the uncertainty in the shopper's mind.

The plain fact is that the housewife suspended her purchase of eggs. Institutional purchases subject to the Department of Health had already been suspended after letters from the regional health authorities to homes and hospitals. That could account for about 12 per cent. of egg consumption, and some people put it as high as 20 per cent. That was a serious blow. But this is a cyclical industry. There was a poor start to 1988, but matters improved in the middle of the summer, with a reduction in chick placings, and the industry was looking forward to 1989 following a successful Christmas season. It is ironic that the housewife suspended her purchases precisely in the week when normally most eggs are sold.

To give the House an idea of what is involved, I quote figures supplied by the central egg agency in my constituency. In the corresponding week in 1987, egg producers shipped more than 13,000 cases. This year, the figure was just under 6,900. In the following week in 1987, the figure was 9,100. This year it was 1,500. That is not a drop of one sixth, but one sixth of shipments. In the week just concluded, instead of 9,100 in 1987, the figure was 2,100. That is a serious decline by anyone's standards. I shall not bore the House with all the prices, but at 30 November the price for grade 2 eggs—that is what my wife buys—was 55·56p per dozen. The week before last, the price was 28p and last week it was 26p. It does not need much imagination to understand what has happened. If we compare those figures with the production cost, which should be put at about 45p per dozen, the consequences for the producer are all too clear.

One can understand the producers' feelings of anguish and anxiety, because the exact nature of that with which they have been charged has never been properly defined. Those who have carried out tests regularly have been tarred with the same brush of suspicion as the producers of contaminated eggs. They regard that as most unfair, quite apart from being most damaging to their reputation and business. It is worth bearing in mind that many of those businesses are family businesses which have been built up over the last 20 years and involve exactly those people whom it has been the Government's business, to encourage with such success.

My concern has been to identify, define and locate the risk so that we can deal with it. We have already dealt with similar problems in agricultural food production. Outbreaks of foot and mouth disease, swine vesicular disease or fowl pest are confined to the farms where they have been reported and no movement of animals or feed is allowed on or off such farms, while the rest of the industry can continue its work. The housewife's confidence, which is all-important, is not affected because she knows that the necessary measures have been taken to confine the trouble to where it has been identified and located.

I hope that we shall achieve this in the case of salmonella enteriditis which is prevalent in our laying flocks. I do not necessarily believe that it is prevalent in eggs. The extent of its prevalence must be put into context. I have had an answer today confirming that there have been 49 outbreaks affecting 1,000 people arising from the consumption, not the production, of eggs. That leaves wide open the question whether it is in the distribution chain, in the storage or in the kitchen or perhaps comes about through human infection.

The former Department of Health and Social Security's figures show that there were 450 outbreaks of salmonella in 1987 affecting 26,000 people, of which at least 20 per cent. were traced to people returning from holidays in one of our EEC partner countries which I had better not name here. That compares with 49 outbreaks affecting 1,000 people of which it is believed that 70 per cent. involved free range hens and eggs. Those people who seek to blame all this trouble on battery producers—we should remember that many producers have both battery and free range hens—have been wide of the mark.

Let me return to the uncertainty that surrounds the matter. Are the tests being carried out satisfactorily? Do they define whether the disease is present? Can anyone tell us what the risk and effect is? So far, we have heard of about 49 outbreaks in 1,000 people, but we have not been told whether they felt off colour for a day, whether they were seriously ill or whether they were mortally affected.

When this suspicion is about, the prudent housewife wonders whether she should buy eggs. The Government's advertisement does not help her make her decision. It says, in effect, "Buy eggs, but beware", but of what is she being asked to beware? Those 49 outbreaks must have been identified to be reported. I presume that they can be located from that identification. Action should be taken to confine the disease to the place where it has been located. I have learned from a reply from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that under an order that some of us may have a little difficulty in pronouncing called the Zoonoses Order 1975, powers exist to

"restrict the movement of animals, birds or their products, including eggs, from any place where salmonella has been found present".

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the crux of the problem is not movement,

but that there is a perception among the public—rightly or wrongly—that the fowl that lay our eggs are fed a somewhat unsuitable diet? The perception has nothing to do with candour or movement. However, until the industry in which both my hon. Friend and I have a constituency interest, can say that our fowls' food is such and such, we will never get faith back in the chicken or egg markets.

Sir Hal Miller: My hon. Friend has a great deal more experience of these matters than me. I will consider feed in a moment, but if my hon. Friend will forgive me I want to finish the point that I was making about the need to explain to the people what the outbreaks are, where they took place and what action is being taken to contain them.

I referred to other agricultural products which could be confined to the affected farm. As my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) will be aware, one must consider the feed that is given to pigs. One must consider its constituent parts and also its preparation on the farm.

The tests are very important for the responsible producers who undertake them. If 60 or 70 per cent. of the industry is undertaking the tests why should its products be tarred unfairly with the brush of suspicion if the tests are adequate? If they are not adequate, why can we not have a test that is adequate? As well as the producers carrying out tests, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is also carrying out tests. The Ministry station in Wolverhampton responsible for the midlands has carried out tests on more than 100 farms, but it has not found one positive result. The producers in my constituency who have carried out tests have produced similar results.

I want to give priority to restoring the housewife's confidence. That must be the acid test. On that basis, I was a little disappointed that the health measures about the food and monitoring came at the end of today's statement from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am grateful to Ministers for introducing the voluntary codes with such speed. However, I had hoped that we could have heard that it was the Government's intention to proceed to a statutory code for better enforcement. The housewife wants to know that there is statutory protection available for food to allow her to feel confident when she buys food for her family.

The Minister's statement alludes to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North about monitoring animal feed and strengthening controls relating to imported protein. There have been rumours that unsuitable elements have entered the food chain through feed preparation—even including offal and, some suggest, diseased offal or deceased birds. That aspect should be brought out more into the open, so that the public may be confident about what is going into the chicken, and therefore about what is unlikely to be contained in the egg.

The housewife is paramount in all of this, but I turn now to the producer. I ask my hon. Friend whether the balance between the two short-term measures announced today is fixed and final, or whether I can persuade him to give more attention to the desirability of culling more hens from the laying flock. My constituents strongly believe, as I do, that there will be a stepped decline in egg consumption and that the only way to restore market order in the medium to long term will be to reduce the flock.

As I said before, earlier this summer producers had already taken steps to reduce their laying flock. They now believe that more hens than the 4 million mentioned in this afternoon's statement should be taken out. If necessary, they might be prepared to accept a lower payment for them, provided that not just the hens are taken out but the associated equipment. In other words, they are asking for a lever scheme to reduce the size of the laying flock.

Over the past two weeks, I have tried to ensure that definite information will be made available about the nature of the risk, that it will be confined to the affected farms, or that, if it is not possible for it to be so confined, that a slaughter policy exists to ensure the removal of that risk. All those measures are designed to restore the confidence of the housewife, who alone can determine the producers' future.

2.22 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I welcome the opportunity provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) to debate the important matter of the salmonella that has allegedly contaminated this country's egg production.

The egg producers whom I represent and I welcome the speed with which the Ministry acted to save the industry. It took only two weeks for a decision to be made, to devise a workable system for producing £17 million of aid, and to help the culling of 2 million birds and the purchase of 15 million eggs daily. Not only that, but my right hon. and hon. Friends have produced a seven-point hygiene plan for tackling the problems of salmonella.

If the matter could rest there we could say that the whole industry was safe and the problem was solved, but I hope that my hon. Friends will continue to pursue the policies that resulted in today's announcement. I do not feel that the public—as my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove has said—are clear about the position. In my view, two aims should now be vigorously pursued: first, to inform the public that eggs are safe to consume, and, secondly, to take further measures to protect the industry.

Mr. Speller: I hope that my hon. Friend does not mean that it is more important to say that eggs are safe to eat and thus protect the industry than to remember those who consume the product. Does he agree that our hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) was perhaps a trifle defeatist? Our aim must surely be to get the egg industry up and running again and to give confidence to the housewife. We can do that only by starting at the root of the problem—the feed—and then making people confident enough to eat what has been fed on it.

Mr. Hind: I accept that. But the information available to us points overwhelmingly to the fact that eggs are safe for the public to eat, and that message must be put across clearly.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was asked on Friday afternoon, when he made a statement, whether he agreed with the comment by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) in a television interview that most egg production in the country was affected by salmonella. He made it clear that that was not correct. We have got to

[Mr. Hind]

push that message, but so far the advertising campaign that has unfortunately become necessary to impress it on the public's mind has been surrounded by too many reservations. The fact is that 13 million eggs are consumed per day—or were; the figure is only half that now—and there have been only 1,500 cases of salmonella and about 50 outbreaks. We understand that the source is roughly 10 farms in the whole country. The message to the public is that they have a 200 million to one chance of catching salmonella from eggs, and that if they cook the eggs correctly they reduce that chance to virtually nothing.

The media do not seem to have got that message very clear. They are being extremely confused by the barrage of expert opinion that has suddenly come forward. Tonight on the 9 o'clock news we heard again from Professor Lacey of Leeds university, who repeated that salmonella had made egg consumption dangerous. But he does not seem to be producing any evidence.

The Department of Health laboratories have reported from their research on 40 cases that they have traced the cause back to eggs. I understand that a private health investigator called Mr. North, who was interviewed on television this evening, says that he is investigating those 40 cases afresh, and that in his view they have a common factor—poor handling of food, in this case eggs. He has drawn the conclusion that the salmonella cases investigated by the Department of Health have much more in common with the mishandling and poor storage of eggs than with their production.

Ministers in both the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health, together with their research scientists, must consider that factor. A classic case of salmonella poisoning has been reported this week. Turkey, which had been frozen, was served at a dinner, but because it had not been properly cooked 40 of the guests suffered from salmonella poisoning. That proves the point that handling, storage and cooking have an important role to play.

The results of research into salmonella in eggs, where salmonella has been excluded, have not been published. The Department of Health is in possession of evidence that is based on research to which hon. Members have not had access. If the results of that research were to be published, it would help to reassure the public that eggs are safe to consume. Those who are connected with agriculture, health and hygiene could evalute the quality of the research and draw appropriate conclusions. At the moment, there is far too much confusion. Ministers could play a major role in helping to solve that problem by publishing the results of the research.

Ministers are also pursuing the aim of protecting the industry by making it ready for the day when the demand for eggs recover. I feel sure that that day is not far off. Britain's egg-producing industry is 99 per cent. efficient. We want it to remain just as efficient. Ministerial plans will help the industry to remain as productive and as able to meet demand as it was in the past.

We must also try to protect jobs. Twenty people in my constituency who were employed in the egg-producing industry have already lost their jobs. That is a disaster in an area where there is high unemployment. Eggs will be imported. If there is less control over the hygienic production of imported eggs, that will increase, not decrease, the chances of salmonella infection. Not the least important point is that the cost of eggs, an essential food, will rise.

Today some of my hon. Friends seemed almost to resent the rescue plans that Ministers have introduced to protect egg producers. My hon. Friends forget that Ministers are also protecting consumers. It is in the interests of consumers that the industry should be able to provide adequate, cheap and hygienic supplies of eggs when demand recovers. It is as much in the interests of consumers as it is in the interests of the industry that my hon. Friends should support the measures that Ministers have introduced. Probably the most important factor is that it is in all our interests that the British egg-producing industry should remain strong and able to provide this most important food.

I was sad about the hysterical reception of the statements about egg production. The industry is geared up to meet a high demand. The 50 per cent. drop in egg production in my constituency and in many other parts of the country was felt almost immediately. Chickens cost 50p a week to feed. Chicks are constantly being born to replace the egg-laying birds. It is a very intensive industry, with high overheads. The drop in demand has had a disastrous effect on producers. We have witnessed the immediate results.

We must not forget that the egg-producing industry needs cereals. There will be a knock-on effect. If egg production is reduced, the cereal mountain will grow larger. The effect will work its way through our agriculture industry.

I repeat, and I hope that the press will bear it in mind, that the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service has recently carried out research across the country involving thousands of eggs from 106 different locations and did not find one case of salmonella. Samples of eggs have been taken from producers in my constituency and not one case of salmonella has been found. I understand that eggs with salmonella have been found in 10 farms in the country. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that that is the case so that we can reassure the public that salmonella is limited to that number of outlets. At least that will give some reassurance.

Regrettably, we have lost a Minister because of this matter. It is quite clear that what was said by the Department of Health has led to the crisis in the egg-producing industry. We have lost an able Minister who has made a major contribution to the House, and politics will be poorer for not having her at the Dispatch Box. But there is one clear lesson. What we say as public figures will be taken notice of and we must be extremely careful in our statements. At this stage, we can be clear and careful in our statements and repeat the message that there is a 200 million to one chance of catching salmonella from eggs. That is less chance than I have of being killed on my way home, driving my car through the streets of London. I would be safer eating half a dozen eggs than driving three or four miles to my home. Every time we step off a pavement we are in more danger of being killed than we are of catching salmonella from eating an egg. Those are the statistics, yet people are not afraid of getting into their cars to go to work or of walking on a pavement.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove and I will be saying to our constituents that on Christmas day, before our turkey and Christmas pudding, we shall enjoy a plateful of eggs florentine in the

safe assumption that we will not catch salmonella. At the same time, we shall be helping and supporting the egg industry in Britain. I hope that the rest of the House will feel able to do the same.

2.38 am

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): If I were the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), I would not bet on my chances of survival—especially if he is in front of me when I drive home at 4 o'clock this morning.

First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on his good fortune in winning a high place in the ballot, which allows us to debate this important subject at an early hour, and his wisdom in choosing a subject which is to the fore of public attention. I very much welcome the way in which he introduced the debate. It was measured and rational and made a pleasant change from some of the remarks that we have come to associate with those who have commented on the egg industry in recent weeks. I also extend my personal welcome to the Minister, who I understand has come hot-foot from Brussels. He has also brought back a cold. I am sure that he would have wished to have returned in different circumstances, but we welcome him nevertheless. He is doubly unfortunate in that he has a cold and he also has to answer for the actions of his ministerial colleagues. I suspect that his task will not be easy.

The subject for debate is the egg industry. I make no apology for turning my attention to this afternoon's statement from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That statement was welcomed by the hon. Members for Bromsgrove and for Lancashire, West but I suspect that the hon. Member for Bromsgrove queried the effectiveness of the statement and has looked more carefully at the details of the statement than he could have at 3.30 this afternoon. If he has, I suspect that he has reached the same conclusions as I have. The scheme announced by the Minister is deficient in each of its three components.

The three principal objectives of the scheme are to reduce the egg surplus, to reduce egg-laying capacity and to reassure the housewife about the safety and wholesomeness of eggs.

The Minister announced that the first measure will be to

"provide a payment to egg packers for the destruction of surplus eggs for a period of four weeks from 21 December. The payment will be at the rate of 30p per dozen eggs on up to 1·1 million cases."

Optimistically, the Minister continued by saying that that "will tackle the overhang of eggs in the system."

As a result of the events of the past couple of weeks there are now more than 400 million surplus eggs, many of which have been in the hands of producers for several weeks.

If we compare the £17 million which has been made available with the Minister's first commitment to pay 30p per dozen up to 1·1 million cases, we get some idea of the magnitude of the problem. Thirty pence is the minimum amount necessary to produce a dozen eggs, taking into account food and limited packaging. The cost of 1·1 million cases would be £9·9 million but, 1·1 million cases covers fewer than the current surplus of 400 million eggs. Therefore, the first bite of that £17 million is £9·9 million to remove 1·1 million cases of eggs.

Since the statement, there has been further surplus egg production which will take another £150,000 out of the available money. That is the rate at which surplus eggs are being produced. By Boxing day, a week today, at the current rate of production, a further £2,720,000 will be needed to purchase surplus production. By new year's eve a further £1,875,000 will have been used to purchase surplus eggs. If we assume that the second measure—the culling of 4 million birds—will take £1 per head, by the end of next week the £17 million will have been used up and we shall still be producing 15 million surplus eggs a day.

If the Minister had come to the Dispatch Box with some humility and said that he was prepared to review the scheme at a later date in the light of take-up and so on, I would not be particularly concerned. However, he made it clear that £17 million is the maximum amount to be made available. In the coming weeks the small producers, those who have been hit hardest during the past two weeks, will be hit even harder.

I have already mentioned the second element of the scheme—the culling of part of the flock. I understand that the culling of 10 per cent. of the flock will be put in hand during the next four weeks. However, the British Poultry Federation and the National Farmers Union—the hon. Member for Bromsgrove alluded to his constituency experience—suggested that between 20 per cent. and 25 per cent. of the flock will have to be culled if production is to be reduced to a level at which surplus eggs can be controlled by the money available. I suspect that the cull will be less than required, which is singularly unfortunate for the small producer. The large producer will be prepared to gamble over the next forthnight or three weeks in the hope that the price of eggs will stabilise and that moult will be induced, and will take other measures to control production, but the small producer will be faced with accepting the outgoers scheme or going bankrupt. Again the small producer will suffer.

There is much unfairness in the scheme announced today because the industry has already made considerable losses. I was speaking to a local egg producer last weekend, who told me that he has been incurring a loss of 10p or 15p on every dozen eggs that he sells. It has been reported that producers have had to slaughter tens of thousands of hens that were not in production. The statement offers them nothing, and if people were forced by economics to take action last week or the week before, no compensation will be available, which is unfair. I hope that when the Minister considers the details of the scheme he will take particular note of that.

The third element of the package was to restore the public's confidence—a point of which the hon. Members for Bromsgrove and Lancashire, West made much play. It is important to restore confidence in egg production, otherwise no amount of short-term measures will be successful and the industry will be decimated, which Labour Members do not want.

I suspect that there is such a deep and fundamental conflict between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health that it is not possible to reconcile the two conflicting approaches, and for that fundamental reason the statement made by the Minister this afternoon was defective.

Despite all the opportunities that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has had and all the questons that have been asked, a statement has not been made about the level of infection among home-produced

[Mr. Ron Davies]

eggs. I remind the hon. Member for Lancashire, West that we continually import eggs from Spain, Belgium and Denmark. The hon. Gentleman can shake his head, but we continually import eggs and should be concerned about the problems of salmonella not only in this country but western Europe.

This afternoon, significantly, the Minister said that all the evidence was that the incidence of salmonella enteritidis was very low in the laying flock. The Minister chose to say not that the incidence of salmonella in eggs was low but that all the evidence was that salmonella enteritidis was very low in the laying flock. If that is so, what is the Government's evidence and when will they make it publicly available?

I suspect that the truth is that MAFF has conducted no extensive survey among the laying flock and that it is relying on reports that it has received from environmental health departments of local authorities up and down the land. If that is the case, MAFF has a clear responsibility to publish the information that it has, and, as the hon. Member for Bromsgrove said, to identify those producers who currently have infected stock or are known to be placing salmonella-infected eggs on to the national market. That is a simple step. In view of the grave crisis that is now threatening the egg industry and the fact that it extends across all sectors, as has been rightly pointed out, whether or not they are guilty and whether or not they are producing clean products, there is a clear opportunity for the Ministry to take action to ensure that that information comes into the public domain.

However, there will still be a doubt remaining in the minds of the public about whether they are receiving honest treatment at the hands of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Given the Ministry's actions over the past several years, that is not surprising. In 1981, the then newly elected Conservative Government deliberately decided to weaken the code that had been the subject of consultation with the industry until 1979. That showed one fundamental truth, and that is that the too-close relationship between MAFF and the National Farmers Union is not in the long-term interests of MAFF or of the National Farmers Union. It is certainly not in the long-term or short-term interests of the consumer, because the consumer is now suffering.

Mr. Hind: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many Conservative Members are as concerned as he is about this matter? We have not been approached by the NFU. I have been approached by my own local consumers. The NFU has not spoken to me about it. That is the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller). There has been an awful lot of mischief-making in the press about the matter.

Mr. Ron Davies: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am not talking about representations that he might or might not have received during the past couple of weeks or so, I am talking about the relationship which has historically existed between the Conservative party and the National Farmers Union. I am talking about a series of events that took place in 1981, which are the precise cause of the problems that we now have in the industry.

A report in today's edition of *The Independent* refers to the Government's decision to reduce funding for research into salmonella. It states:

"It stopped the research at a time of crisis in public confidence in the food and farming industries, but also in the face of increasing numbers of academic papers suggesting that it is the Ministry's own commitment to the poultry and feed industries which has slowed important reforms in the regulation of the poultry and egg business.

In 1986, a vet employed by the Ministry of Agriculture published a paper which recorded the failure of regulations introduced in 1981. They had been framed to safeguard the public from salmonella, had been weakened after industry protests at their cost, and were finally brought into force in much weaker form than intended.

The regulations have not worked. At least 10 per cent. of samples of the animal products produced in this country and fed to poultry is contaminated with salmonella; up to a third of samples of such products which are imported were infected in 1985."

That accusation was substantiated by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). Another article in *The Independent* states:

"The Tory MP for Boston with Holland, Sir Richard Body, a former chairman of the Commons Agriculture Committee and a farmer, fears that guidelines issued in 1981 were weakened after pressure from the feed processing industry. He said: 'I was told on very good authority that there was a much stronger order being drafted. The idea was that all poultry should be examined for salmonella, because those who had been carrying out an examination believed that the amount of salmonella in the birds was rather serious.'"

Those were the comments of an hon. Member who is respected on both sides of the House. Moreover, the vet is not an anonymous leaker of information; he is Dr. Matthews, who wrote in the *State Veterinary Journal:*

"There was considerable resistance to these proposals".

John Field, the chairman of the United Kingdom Renderers Association said:

"The original proposals were very expensive, but there was a distinct change of heart when the Conservatives came into office. They were happy to drop the idea of a code and settle for random testing."

Those comments appeared in yestereday's edition of *The Observer.*

In case there is any doubt about the veracity of those statements, let me refer the House to a draft document produced by the Secretary of State for Wales, who was then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That document, produced in April 1980 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Welsh Office Agriculture Department, said:

"The earlier proposals were formulated on the basis that all domestic plants processing animal protein for inclusion in animal feed should be licensed. Licences would be issued only if the process itself was capable of killing salmonellae and other disease organisms and the layout, construction and operation of the processing plant were such that re-contamination of the finished product was prevented. Similar standards were to be required of the imported product. The Departments wish to record their indebtedness and to express their thanks to the organisations for the response which was made in the ensuing correspondence and discussions on those proposals."

That is what is supposed to have happened, but the report continues:

"The new proposals reflect the wish of Ministers that in the present economic climate the Industry should itself determine how best to produce a high-quality product, and that the role of Government should be restricted to prescribing a standard for the product and to enforcing observance of that standard. Ministers take the view that this simpler approach would have

the incidental advantage of enabling the Industry to prepare for more stringent measures which might have to be taken at some future date."

What happened to that enforcement? Inspections were carried out and it was recognised that salmonella was contaminating feed that was being fed to the British poultry flock. In a third of cases, infected feed was being distributed but in not one of the cases was a prosecution instigated by the Ministry. That is the Ministry's record in this matter.

It was little surprise when increasing evidence of salmonella emerged earlier in 1988. The statement in August this year by the Government's chief medical officer warned the public of the dangers of salmonella and—as successive Ministers have told us in parliamentary answers—the rise in salmonella reporting was constant during the summer months. But no urgent action was taken then. The Government's only response was to cut research. Today's edition of *The Independent* says:

"The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is directly responsible for blocking progress in the elimination of salmonella infection in the 35 million laying hens, and nearly 500 million table fowl slaughtered annually in this country.

As the present scare was gaining momentum last month, the Ministry told food scientists in the government-sponsored Institute of Food Research, near Bristol, that it would no longer fund their research into providing birds with a natural protection from the salmonella bacteria."

That is not much of a response. The Government recognised the increasing incidence of the disease, but the only action that they were prepared to take was to stop specific research designed to protect the laying flock from the problem of salmonella. They did not tighten the codes on rendering or on producing flocks. All that they did was to cut research. It was not until that slip by the Under-Secretary of State for Health, whether inadvertent or calculated, that we saw any action from MAFF. It was not until 5 December—several days after the hon. Lady made her statement—that the new code of practice was introduced by MAFF.

That new code still does not have statutory force or additional resources to ensure that it is properly followed. This week's edition of *Farmers Weekly* notes that we are due for yet another code—presumably a super-code. It states:

"Farmers cannot guarantee that their eggs and chickens are salmonella-free by testing, according to a veterinary spokesman.

In an unattributable briefing, arranged by the Ministry of Agriculture, the spokesman told FARMERS WEEKLY that the guarantee could only be offered by testing every bird and egg to destruction.

The only way to minimise the risk of infection was by following a new code of practice for commercial laying flocks, due to be published by the ministry next week."

Will the Minister tell us what status that new super-code will have? Will it be mandatory? Will producers be required to state that they are complying with the code? Will the Ministry take it on itself to publish the list of those producers who comply with the code? If there is to be a prospect of restoring public confidence in the poultry industry, that is the course of action that must be taken.

I have plenty more arguments to deploy, if my hon. Friends wish me to entertain them for longer. Let us have a look at the dispute between MAFF and the Department of Health which led to the resignation of the Under-Secretary of State. There can be only one of two possibilities. Either she was wrong, and therefore properly resigned or she was right, and therefore improperly resigned.

If the Under-Secretary of State was wrong in her statement, why was that statement not immediately disowned by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? Why did he not on the Monday make it abundantly clear that she was inaccurate in her statement? If he had done that, the industry would have been spared a fortnight of heartbreak and taxpayers would have been saved at least £18 million.

It may well have been that the hon. Lady was right. If she was, it merely demonstrates that, despite all the lessons of the past 12 months, there is still an air of complacency in the Department. It gives me no great pleasure to say that I fear that the measures introduced today will not restore confidence in the industry or reassure consumers, and that what is intended to be a short-term palliative and a bailing-out measure for the industry for this month will be the start of a much longer, sorrier saga.

3.3 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder): We have had an interesting debate and I shall do my best in the remaining time to answer as many of the questions as I can.

I start by expressing my personal sorrow and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends at the news of the death of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). He was much respected on both sides of the House, not least for his knowledgeable contributions to agriculture debates. His death is a sad loss to the House and to his party. I should be grateful if our condolences could please be conveyed to his family.

This has been a well-informed and helpful debate. I must express my appreciation to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) for initiating it, and at the same time to express my recognition of his staunch advocacy on behalf of the egg industry during the past fortnight. He has not been alone in that and here tonight are other hon. Members whose interest has been apparent throughout that period. They include my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), who has spoken, and the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who has spoken from the Opposition Front Bench.

Perhaps, it would be helpful if I were to provide the House with some facts and figures about the significance of the egg industry to the economy of the United Kingdom. The output of the egg industry is worth about £500 million a year at the farm gate and perhaps twice that at retail level. There are about 35,000 farmers who depend in whole or in part on their earnings from eggs, and more than 3,000 egg packing stations provide employment for at least 15,000 people. Of course, a great many other people are engaged in distributing, marketing and selling eggs after they have been packed.

It is not a small, unimportant industry with which we are concerned. However, we all acknowledge that it is an industry with a problem. It is a fact that the number of outbreaks of food poisoning linked to eggs has increased this year, and that the number of people from whom the new salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 has been isolated has increased. Indeed, 51 outbreaks this year is 51 too many. My views on this were made quite clear to the industry very shortly after I became involved with the issues and before the events of the past fortnight caused a

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slide in the demand for eggs. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health have stressed that the problem must be kept in perspective. The number of reported cases of food poisoning from salmonella linked to eggs is very small by comparison with the 30 million eggs consumed a day and the 200 million consumed a week.

By the summer, it was clear that there was a new and growing problem from salmonella enteritidis phage 4 type linked to eggs. As a result of that information, the Government acted immediately to tackle the problem at every point in the production chain. Among other initiatives, that led to the publication of codes of practice to apply to commercial and breeding flocks. However, those two codes of practice are only the start and we have been preparing other steps, which will include—as my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced this afternoon while I was at an Agriculture Council meeting in Brussels—more stringent bacteriological monitoring of animal protein for animal feed, the registering of breeding flocks and hatcheries for hygiene control purposes and the strengthening of the licensing provision related to imported animal protein. Those steps are designed to tackle the problem of this particular strain of salmonella and to reduce infection of the egg-laying flock.

My Department has also been working closely with the chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, and officials of the Department of Health over the advice given to consumers. Some reports suggested that the advice of the chief medical officer has been questioned. I do not believe that to be so. Sir Donald Acheson is a most distinguished figure in the medical profession. His advice is excellent and it should be followed in full. I should also emphasise that, in the past two weeks, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and I worked together closely during the absence of my right hon. Friend on urgent Government business in Montreal and Brussels.

The uncertainty over the implications of salmonella enteritidis has caused a sharp decline in egg sales. There is no doubt that that has caused acute practical and financial difficulties for the egg industry. As my right hon. Friend told the House earlier today, the Government have decided, in these exceptional circumstances, to introduce two short-term measures. The first will provide a payment to egg packers for the destruction of surplus eggs at the rate of 30p a dozen eggs on up to 1·1 million cases over a four-week period. There are 360 eggs in a case. That represents nearly half the normal supply. The second measure will be introduced to help the industry to reduce the size of the egg-laying flock. It will provide for payment for a bird aged between 18 weeks and 30 weeks. The scheme will enable up to 4 million hens—roughly equivalent to 10 per cent. of the laying flock—to be slaughtered under the Ministry's supervision.

Those two short-term measures, taken together, are designed to assist the egg industry to adjust to new market conditions. I shall cover the details of the scheme later when I answer hon. Members' questions.

We hope that the actions that we have announced today, in conjunction with the advertising campaign that sets out the advice of the chief medical officer and presents the facts to consumers, will quickly help to restore order to the egg market in the interests of consumers and everyone working in that important sector of the food industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West highlighted the question of the poor handling of food and the effect that that has on hygiene. It is true that poor kitchen hygiene is an important factor in causing food poisoning—it always has been. A campaign for hygiene in the home will be launched in January in conjunction with the Department of Health. A leaflet will be made available nationally through supermarkets, doctors' surgeries, health visitors and libraries. Further initiatives are planned for schools and catering establishments. We must continue, however, to tackle the problem at every stage in the chain, and that is our intention.

I was asked about the tests on eggs carried out by producers and packers. The level of infection in flocks is very low. An enormous number of eggs would have to be tested to be able to say safely that the statistical probability was that a flock was salmonella-free. I was asked about the feed for chickens. The recycling of animal protein in processing plants, which has happened for many years, is covered by the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981. The rendering involved utilises high temperatures which should kill salmonella organisms.

I was asked where salmonellae have been found. Salmonella enteritidis has been isolated from the few layer-breeding flocks and commercial laying flocks. The organism may be found in the gut or in the ovary. The most effective means of detecting the organism in a flock is by taking samples from the environment in a poultry house. It has also been isolated from animal feed on rare occasions.

It was asked whether these tests were reliable. There are two sorts of test. The first is used to determine whether salmonella is prevalent in the environment—the one I am discussing now. The second is used to determine whether live chickens suffer from the strain of salmonella under scrutiny this morning. The environmental tests are reliable. I am told by the chief veterinary officer that the bacteriological isolation techniques are extremely sensitive and reliable. Use is made of a pre-enrichment technique to ensure that latent salmonellae present are encouraged to grow on the culture plate.

I have been asked whether there was a simple test to discover whether live chickens suffered from this strain of salmonella. Again, I am informed by the chief veterinary officer that no simple test has yet been devised anywhere to determine this. We must bear in mind—this has been well known for a long time—that there are about 1,800 different types of salmonella.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove suggested that we are not taking enough laying hens out of the laying flock. This is a matter of fine judgment. My hon. Friend will have noted that we are paying to take young birds at the beginning of their laying cycle out of the flock. To have paid for the culling of old hens would have run the risk of paying farmers to do something that they would have done anyway. We hope that taking out young birds will have the maximum effect on over-supply, and it means that the effects will last for about a year. If we take out too many young birds now, and the market recovers sufficiently in a year's time, we shall merely have opened the door to a flood of imports. Indeed, that fear was expressed in the debate.

I was also asked whether it was possible to use the zoonoses order to follow up cases that are reported to the state veterinary service. I am informed that the order is being used to pursue cases of reported salmonella poisoning, and that it will go on being used in that way.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly asked whether there were controls on the domestic production of processed animal protein. I have already covered that, but I emphasise that all protein processing plants are being inspected by my officials on a regular three-monthly basis, in addition to any monitoring carried out by the plants themselves. If salmonella contamination is found in any of the plants' production, a notice is served on the owners requiring them to ensure that all the product conforms with the required bacteriological standard—that is to say, there must be no salmonella—within a specific time, after which a re-inspection visit takes place.

One of my hon. Friends asked about the number of food poisoning cases during the past few years. The figure for 1987—I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food mentioned this during his statement—is about 20,000 reported cases of food poisoning. In 1988, we would expect an increased proportion of cases to be caused by salmonella enteriditis and for the first 10 months of the year there have been 1,000 reported cases of that form of food poisoning in eggs.

As I promised, I shall deal with some of the details of the scheme and the questions that have arisen. There is some doubt about when the egg industry scheme comes into operation. It will come into operation on Wednesday 21 December. From that date, packers will be able to offer quantities of eggs equal to their weekly throughput. Many people have asked how they should apply. Packers in England should apply to their Ministry regional office; those in Wales should apply to the Welsh Office; and those in Scotland and Northern Ireland should apply to the respective Agriculture Departments.

It has been asked, although not during this debate, why only packers are involved in the scheme. Helping packers to take their surplus eggs off the market is the simplest and quickest way to help all producers. Once those eggs have been removed, the market will be strengthened and packers will be able to buy more eggs. But producers will benefit directly under the scheme for the slaughter of pullets. The scheme that was formulated during the week would normally have taken officials in the Ministry several weeks, if not months, to formulate properly. In this case, we decided to go through the packers.

There is anxiety about a public health risk from the eggs that will be destroyed. There should be no health risk because the eggs will be either buried or incinerated, under supervision, at approved sites.

I shall try to answer some of the questions asked by the hon. Member for Caerphilly about the slaughter of hens scheme. The immediate aim of the scheme is to assist egg producers to get rid of hens that they no longer require because of the fall in the egg market. More generally, the scheme aims to restore a better balance between supply and demand by removing up to 4 million hens. That will help all egg producers, including those who do not participate in the scheme. Egg producers will be invited to apply to the Ministry saying how many hens they wish to slaughter. There will be a minimum of 500. Some scaling-down of applications will be done if the total of applications exceeds the ceiling of 4 million for the United Kingdom, of which 3,456,000 is the figure for England and Wales. Depending on uptake, the scheme will cost up to £6·8 million in compensation, plus about £1·2 million for operational costs.

Some hon. Members asked today why the figure of 4 million has been chosen. It is because it represents 10 per cent. of the total laying flock and up to 45 per cent. of birds in that age group. It should be enough to allow the industry to adjust to reduced demand. We have chosen the age group from 18 to 30 weeks because we want to take out those birds in the early part of egg production and thereby produce the maximum possible effect on supply. Any owner of domestic fowls who wishes to slaughter 500 or more eligible birds can apply for the benefits of the scheme.

There is concern about how the carcases will be disposed of. That will depend on individual circumstances, but local authorities, including water authorities, will be consulted on the most appropriate means to do that.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend accept that egg producers are faced with the prospect of digging holes and disposing of the carcases, and that the scheme that he is proposing will greatly help them to dispose of the 2 million carcases?

Mr. Ryder: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. I confirm that that is the case. All sorts of advice and assistance will be given by vets, local authorities and local MAFF regional offices which are receiving instructions from us.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly raised a number of further questions. I am trying to cover as many as possible and I apologise to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) for delaying his debate, but it is important, in view of the number of questions asked during the debate——

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I can assure the Minister that my egg farmers will be interested in the debate.

Mr. Ryder: I am grateful to hear that. If it were another time of day, I should be just as interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's debate as he is to hear this debate.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly asked whether the schemes were deficient. I have tried to explain how the eggs will be destroyed. The process will last for not more than four weeks. In a brief meeting with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Brussels earlier this evening, he asked me to emphasise the fact that it was a four-week period, that the final figures for the scheme had been announced and that there will be no change in Government policy. I know that the hon. Gentleman was anxious to know whether there were second thoughts on the Government's part, and I have it from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture that that is not the case.

I hope that, in my speech, which has lasted for about 30 minutes, I have answered most of the questions. If I have overlooked any questions, I shall be more than happy to answer them as soon as possible, either by letter or by any other means because it is important that everything should be clarified so that we can continue to remove the uncertainty for the sake of consumers.

The advertisement that appeared for the first time last Friday and ran over the weekend was intended to do just that. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture and

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my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health are using every available means at their disposal to clarify the matter. It is a far more technical and complex matter than many people perhaps appreciate. In many ways, it is a technical problem because it is a relatively new strain of salmonella and scientisits have no sure way of finding out about the strain in live hens. However, we are continuing to take every possible step to ensure that we reduce the number of outbreaks of this strain of salmonella.

I agree wholeheartedly with the chief medical officer that, until the number of such outbreaks begins to decline, we shall not return to 100 per cent. confidence in the egg market. That is why I know that the industry itself is most anxious, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove said, to tackle the problem as well. Doubtless we will have other opportunities to debate this matter in future. I hope that I have answered all the questions that were raised. I reiterate that if there are any outstanding matters that I have not covered I shall be more than pleased to try to clarify them tomorrow.

Football Matches (Public Order)

3.30 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): There is no issue between us in the House that, wherever and whenever hooliganism occurs, it must be dealt with. There is no doubt also that the reports show that the problem is growing in this country and elsewhere.

Hooliganism is not confined to any social group or to a particular area. Hooliganism is not only a problem for football, it is a problem for society. Reports in many newspapers clearly show the extent of the problem. There are headlines and reports such as:

"Seventy arrested as drunks clash with police in rural areas. Fifteen youths were questioned on Saturday . . . at Shrewsbury. More than 40 people were arrested in York after attacks on police as youths spilled out of public houses . . .

The first outbreak of trouble came at a country and western evening attended by 600 middle-aged enthusiasts . . .

More than 1,000 police officers have been rendered unfit for service this year as a result of assaults in English and Welsh rural areas."

In Swindon, Bracknell, Woking, Bedhampton, Caterham, Bournemouth, Llanelli, Oxford and throughout the length and breadth of the country there are problems with vandalism and hooliganism.

This problem does not simply occur in sport and at football matches. In 1980 there was one death and 1,700 arrests at horse-racing fixtures, including 600 during royal Ascot. In rowing 290 people were arrested during the Oxford and Cambridge boat race and 140 during the Henley regatta week. Two years ago there was violence at the Tory party conference and the chairman apologised to CND for the damage to its exhibition stand. Some young Tories were even banned from staying at a hotel because of an outbreak of bad behaviour.

In 1987 there were 141,000 arrests for violence against the person and there were 559,000 arrests for criminal damage. Between 1986 and 1987 arrests for violence against the person in counties that do not have a first or second division football club increased, in Surrey by 25 per cent., in Norfolk by 29 per cent., and in Dorset by 27 per cent. In counties with first or second division football clubs there was an increase, in Merseyside over that period of 4 per cent., in London of 11 per cent. and in the west midlands of 1 per cent.

Of the 3,700,000 reported crime in England and Wales in 1987, only 6,000 were in or around football grounds and they included payment dodgers, pickpockets, illegal parkers, illegal traders and drug arrests. Ostensibly it would appear that it is safer inside a football ground than outside one.

In 1980, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1988 the Opposition offered the Government parliamentary time to legislate on football violence. The Government failed to respond. Instead they passed legislation giving the police powers to stop and search people and vehicles travelling to football matches and they banned all alcohol at matches.

The Government now propose introducing an identity card scheme, against the advice of senior police officers, the Police Federation, football legislators, supporters' clubs, civil libertarians and civil liberty groups. The Government must believe that the scheme will be seen as a form of decisive action—whether or not it works. I do not blame the Government for that, because given the uproar that followed the Turin, Heysel, and Leyton

incidents, they had to be seen doing something. However, they must reconsider whether the scheme they propose is the most effective.

The Government expect that, in time, the withdrawal of identity cards from the culprits will eliminate the problem, leaving football crowds free from violence, and parents and children free to enjoy the game in safety. It is an admirable aim, with which we all agree, but can it be achieved by the proposed scheme?

As a magistrate, I look to the scheme to provide something more than the power to fine offenders. Will it work, or will it mean taking unwarranted action against millions of football supporters, remembering that 99 per cent. of them do not indulge in violence?

This week's issue of the Police Federation magazine advises.

"Think again, Mr. Moynihan. The Report of Sports Minister's Colin Moynihan's Working Party on a National Membership Scheme for Football has come in for almost universal condemnation. Sadly, the strictures are deserved, for this is an extraordinary mish mash of good intentions and half baked nostrums. If the Government insists on using its majority to steamroller this scheme through Parliament, the results could be disastrous."

The report continues by remarking that the scheme will not work:

"When it breaks down, it will do so on match days and give rise to the threat of even worse disorder than it seeks to suppress."

Also highlighted is the likely reaction of a crowd of 50,000-plus supporters, such as that seen at Highbury earlier this month, which

"if unable to gain admission because of delays at the turnstiles, does not have to guessed at . . . The conclusion is inescapable that it is the Department of the Environment, responding to prompting from the Prime Minister's Policy Unit, which was on the working party, which has pushed this through against the best professional advice."

That is the view of the Police Federation, whose officers will have to deal with the scheme's implementation.

As far as we can see, the identity system will comprise a central, computerised network of 92 linked terminals. An application for membership will be made on a form obtained at a post office, local shop or the club itself, and it must be submitted to the club of the applicant's choice together with two passport-style photographs. The application will be checked and entered on the central computer.

How will it be known at that stage that the information given on the form is correct? No one will know because at that point there will be no checking system. Subsequently, the applicant's identity card will be posted to him. Only at that stage is there a check—that the address given is valid. It will depend on the cost to the individual of that system as to how many supporters will be lost to the game.

What about the casual supporter who decides, "It's a fine day—I'll go to the match"? The Minister is reported as telling a group of Conservative Members that that problem will be overcome by allowing applicants to register as casual supporters on the morning of the match they wish to attend. If that is so, how will their applications be checked—given that, otherwise, a period of seven days is required for that process?

I do not believe that people will go down and register in the morning. They will simply not go to the match. It is fine for those who can get into the car and spend half an hour going to fetch an application form, but few people in my constituency have cars, and problems with bus services mean they will not go into town twice—once to get the form and once to attend the match.

Under the scheme children must be accompanied by their parents. But hundreds of young football fans do not go to matches with their parents: they go together in groups—not necessarily school groups; they get together locally. At what age must they have an identity card? Will aged persons be exempt, and if so at what age?

What will happen on the day of the match? The spectator goes along to the ground; he puts his card into the machine; he is identified by the central computer; the turnstile is unlocked; the identity card is given to the gate man; the spectator is identified by his photograph, and he pays his money. All that takes a long time. Anyone who goes to football matches regularly has seen the thousands of people who go through the turnstiles in the last 15 or 20 minutes—sometimes the last 10 minutes—before a major match. It is unbelievable. I do not think that a computerised system will be able to take that in its stride and be able to register and check all those people and let them through.

What if the card is rejected? What about the argument that that will cause? What if someone is not identified with the card that he presents, or the computer goes on the blink? All the problems that we are trying to remove from the football ground will be transferred back to the local community. Many supporters will not put up with the hassle, and there will be a further loss of custom as a result.

A national opinion poll surveyed 947 people who went to football matches or said that they were interested in football. Asked how often they went to a league game nowadays nearly half the sample said never, 90 per cent. said once a month, 10 per cent. said every two or three months, 12 per cent. said only twice a season and 11 per cent. said that they went even less often than that. Of the 48 per cent. who never attended a league game nowadays over three quarters—79 per cent.—said that they had attended games in the past, while 20 per cent. of those interested in football had never attended a league game at all. Over half the respondents—56 per cent.—thought that a compulsory membership scheme would be a good idea, while 37 per cent. thought that it would be a bad idea. But of those who were closer to the game—those who actually went to football matches—54 per cent. thought that a compulsory scheme would be a bad idea. When they were asked whether they would apply for a membership card, 40 per cent. said no. That means that there will be a falling-off in attendance.

Even if the system works, delays at turnstiles will lead to public order problems outside the ground. Standard practice is to open the gates in the last 15 minutes of any match. What will happen if disgruntled spectators are still outside? Those inside will be trying to get out while those outside are trying to get in. Both activities conflict with the law and with the conditions laid down on the safety certificates.

At some grounds turnstiles lead directly on to a busy road, with no possibility of resiting them. Moreover, it is always difficult to recruit suitable staff, and it will be more difficult if the system is brought in. Small clubs like mine in Barnsley, playing good, attractive football, are trying to increase attendance. They will run into financial difficulties in funding the scheme.

I understand, according to a story in one of tomorrow's newspapers, that a firm has offered to fund the scheme,

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free of charge. However, there will be a cost and it will have to be looked into. Any loss of revenue because of loss of custom and a decrease in membership will lead to great concern and difficulties. Some of the directors to whom I have spoken recently have said that the difficulties will be so great that clubs such as Barnsley will go out of business.

As they have experienced very little trouble for many years, we have to ask why they should have to introduce a membership scheme to prevent trouble that is not being caused. No two clubs are alike, so different measures have to be adopted for each club. The clubs, in co-operation with the Government, have installed closed-circuit TV; they have segregated the rival supporters; they have introduced family areas and voluntary membership schemes; they have adopted local plans that have been agreed with the police and the local authorities. Those measures have virtually eliminated all crowd disorder incidents. Those ideas can be built on, without the need to introduce an identity scheme. Cards do not catch, and never have caught, anyone.

As for Sheffield Wednesday's system—our nearest neighbour—all trains are met at the station and the football fans are escorted to the football ground. After the match they are escorted back to the trains. All coaches come off the motorway at junction 36, are put into convoys and escorted to the match. All alcohol is confiscated at those points. Sheffield Wednesday has had no trouble whatsoever for ages.

As a magistrate, I know that something is needed to deter football hooliganism. Fines do not deter. Why should we not use the magistrates' courts effectively? Why should they not be able to issue community orders each Saturday, or on each day that a match is played, for every offender? Millwall's idea is that, for every offender, the community order should state that work should be done at Millwall's football ground.

Why should we not expand the use of the probation service? The Government's booklet "Punishment, Custody and the Community" states that community service should be used and that the use of of the probation service should be extended, Why should not offenders be asked to report to the local police station on each day that a match is played? Why should investigations not be made at half time during matches to make sure that offenders are not at the match? Hooligans inside football grounds can be assumed to be hooligans outside football grounds. The use of the courts in that way would act as a deterrent.

The Police Federation said:

"Mrs. Thatcher's insistence that football hooliganism must be conquered reflects the feelings of the whole law-abiding public. All the more reason why such an objective needs something far, far more feasible than this lamentable miscarriage of judgement."

That is why many people believe that the identity card scheme will not work.

3.47 am

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): As my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport is shortly to unveil the Bill that will require football supporters to carry membership cards to gain admission to football matches, it is certain that in the coming weeks there will be a substantial volume of comment about the merits of the proposed legislation. Understandably, much of that comment will be on the sports pages, and it will come from those who are directly involved with football, such as the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who initiated this debate.

I want, however, to deal with this as someone who is not directly involved with football but who is concerned about public order and about the cost to the whole community of the need to have substantial numbers of police officers at football matches and who is concerned that Britain's name overseas should not be besmirched by being associated in people's minds with violence and hooliganism by Britons at football matches. This is a matter that concerns us all, not just those who are directly involved with football.

Who in Britain, in June 1985, could not have been ashamed and appalled by the scenes of violence at the European cup final in Brussels that resulted in 38 deaths and a much larger number of injuries? Who in Britain could not have felt a sense of outrage and shame that the behaviour of some of our citizens led to such a tragedy? Who could not have resolved that we should all do everything possible to make sure that such a disaster never happened again?

Undoubtedly matters have improved during the past three seasons, with restrictions on alcohol at football matches and full use being made of closed-circuit television, crowd segregation and firm and positive policing. A continuous and sensible package of measures has been taken of which the proposed legislation forms part. I suspect that the only reason why it has not been in place earlier is that the football clubs have not been prepared to produce their own voluntary scheme. But it is necessary to introduce legislation to further that package of measures, to make sure that all grounds are licensed, that responsibilities go with such licences and to introduce a national membership scheme. All those initiatives form part of an interlocking and inter-relating set of measures to tackle football hooliganism.

There is still a long way to go before football's good name is restored. Last season there were 6,147 arrests and 6,542 ejections from football league matches. There were also the recent appalling events at the European championships in Germany earlier this year. Those statistics translate into substantial amounts of police time, magistrates courts' time, Crown court time and therefore substantial sums of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money.

Let us not forget that it requires a sizeable police effort to police the matches and contain the risk of hooliganism. For example, Thames Valley police provides some 80 to 100 police at most football league matches in its area, and considerably more at some matches. The cost of such policing is about £7,500 per match for a four-hour period. On average, the clubs pay some £2,000 towards the cost, so that ratepayers and taxpayers foot the rest of the bill. Of course, police officers on duty at football matches are not available for duty elsewhere. If Oxford were playing at home, there could, and almost certainly would, be about 100 police officers in attendance at the match. In contrast, at the same time almost certainly fewer than 20 police officers would be available to police the whole of the Banbury area in north Oxfordshire. Oxford United football club has a good reputation and has taken every measure possible to reduce public disorder within its grounds. How much worse the situation would be at clubs which have a consistently bad reputation for public disorder.

Those manpower figures and costings clearly demonstrate that football hooliganism affects us all, not just those who attend football matches or live and work near football grounds, but the whole community. I welcome the promised Bill that will provide the framework for a national membership scheme designed to break the link between football and hooliganism. The prime purpose of the scheme is to keep troublemakers out of football grounds. Removing the football match as the focus for the activities of the hooligans will also act as a disincentive for them to travel and will help to break the link between violence and football.

It is said the scheme will simply move violence from inside to outside the grounds, but I disagree. My experience as a barrister tells me that those who are involved in football violence need the anonymity of the crowd and the presence of the crowd to behave as they do. They will act in groups in a crowd in ways in which they would not act as individuals in the street. Unable to get into football matches, the thugs will have no crowd in which to act.

The responsible football spectator has nothing to lose and everything to gain by the introduction of a national membership scheme. Concerns that have been raised are misplaced. I have no doubt that when the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone sees the full details of the scheme, he will find that many of his fears have been misplaced. The scheme will not interfere with civil liberties. No one has an absolute right to enter a football ground and clubs already refuse entry to unwanted spectators. However, hooliganism does infringe the civil liberties of the general public—those who live near football grounds and those who live away from the grounds but find that the number of police officers in their area has been cut because they are needed to police matches.

Improved technology means that those with membership cards will be able to enter football grounds speedily. Far from being a cost to clubs, I suspect that they will soon find that the membership scheme provides a positive cash flow. As a publisher with some experience of the commercial potential of membership lists, I know that there are enormous commercial opportunities in a membership list of millions. One company has already agreed to set up and run the scheme at no cost to clubs. I am sure that any competent club will be able to turn the scheme into a revenue-generating opportunity.

Radical change was needed if football was to survive as a spectator sport and if English clubs were once more to be acceptable abroad. My hon. Friend the Minister is introducing a sensible scheme as part of a series of measures in the interests of genuine football supporters and the community as a whole. I hope that the scheme will have widespread support in the country.

3.57 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) began by saying that he is not a football supporter. That was illustrated in his speech. I am sure that he knows a good deal about being a barrister and publisher but he knows nothing about football or the proposed Bill. Much of what he said related to Heysel and West Germany and the proposed Bill does not attempt to tackle those problems. The hon. Gentleman received a brief from someone who is no friend of his. Even the Minister woke up when he heard some of the nonsense that was spoken.

The opposition to the proposed measure is gaining strength, not least among Conservative Members. This is an opportunity for us to discuss the measure and I am sure that we will not discuss it again. When the Bill goes to the other place it will be buried, and rightly so.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on raising the matter. He has done the House a service. Even at this late hour it is a pleasure to expose some of the myths about hooliganism that are attached to football. We are not talking about "football hooligans" but, as I have said, hooligans attached to football. My hon. Friend mentioned the survey in *The Mail on Sunday*. I will not go into further detail because he dealt with that adequately. He also mentioned the Police Federation's response to the proposed measure. The police will be at the sharp end of the legislation. The federation says that the scheme will not work. Anybody who looks at it in depth will realise that.

The football league's executive staff association, which has 440 members, is almost unanimous in its opposition to the proposal. It says that the proposed identity card scheme would not serve any useful purpose in preventing the spectator violence which is attached to football. Those experienced professionals feel that the scheme will lead to unaccompanied youngsters becoming the targets of violence, which is

"a truly frightening prospect."

As chairman of the all-party football committee, I have received many letters from clubs such as Ipswich Town, Chelsea, Southampton, Sheffield Wednesday, Stoke City, Sunderland, Exeter City and Wrexham. Conservative Members representing marginal seats should closely consider the proposed legislation, because a number of clubs will go the wall as a result of it, and as a result of that a number of Conservative Members will also go to the wall.

I shall refer particularly to Reading football club because the Minister for Sport, donning a Reading FC tie —I expect that he will use it on some future occasion— opened its membership scheme. Reading says that as a result of the proposed legislation

"the Government has set us back five years."

It has paid about £100,000 to introduce the voluntary membership scheme that the Minister opened. That is not an isolated case, and many clubs throughout the country will find it difficult to exist as a result of the proposed legislation.

I know that the Minister is under much pressure, from the kind of letters that I and other hon. Members have been receiving. Conservative Back Benchers are pressing for concessions, and my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone said that some have been made, but they are insufficient and the wrong approach is being taken.

The Minister's justification for action—violent hooliganism associated with football—does not bear close scrutiny. An answer that I received from the Home Office dated 7 November said that 3·9 per cent. of adults in Britain were arrested last year throughout the country compared with 0·03 per cent. at football matches.

The hon. Member for Banbury contradicted himself. It is true that the hooligan wants to be associated with the crowd, but the hon. Gentleman rightly said that because of

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closed-circuit television and segregation the hooligan has been thrown out of football grounds and back into society. Arrests at football grounds increased last season by 11 per cent., but that increase has been attributed to police use of closed-circuit television to catch offenders who previously went free.

The debate concerns public order, and last year violent assaults increased by 13 per cent.—rather more than the increase in football-related arrests. Given that most football arrests are not for violent crime, we argue that the problem is one for the wider community. At the recent Liverpool-Everton match, there were no arrests inside the ground and three outside it, two of which were for theft from cars while one was for ticket touting. Eight of the arrests at White Hart Lane before the Spurs-Millwall match were because of a clamp-down on ticket touts. When there have been problems, such as at Stockport county versus Burnley this season, football has acted swiftly, as I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) will testify. Burnley uses closed-circuit television camera evidence to ban offenders for life.

The problem of violence in society is the true problem, which identity cards cannot solve. Luton Town has been successful, by its own terms, in banning away supporters from Kenilworth road, but figures for violent offences in the Luton area prove that the problem has not been destroyed but displaced. In Britain, violent offences increased by 12 per cent. in 1987 compared with the previous year. In Bedfordshire police division C, which covers Luton, the increase was 14 per cent. The contrast is stronger when one compares Luton with the rest of Bedfordshire, where the increase was less than the national average. Violence has become not better but worse since identity cards were introduced at Kenilworth road.

When the police are given effective resources and support, they can tackle hooliganism. It was reassuring to see the ringleaders at Wolverhampton convicted last week and sent to goal. That was positive action by the police and the club. The police who are involved in the dangerous undercover work that leads to such convictions know full well that identity cards are irrelevant. This week, a sergeant who had to retain some secrecy on the point about gangs at Arsenal revealed that

"The football match was never the focus of the aggression. Once the match was over, opposition fans would be trailed or supporters in the match elsewhere in London would be ambushed at Euston. They were sophisticated criminals who were careful to avoid incidents inside the grounds because they knew they would be detected at Highbury. Identity cards would do nothing to defeat the problems of society and the cards would be an additional target for theft."

The Minister for Sport wants to make cosy comparisons between football and other sports, because he believes that families need only to return to football to solve many problems. Football has never been a family sport. It has always been a male-dominated sport. The Government refer to the American game of football as though it were some panacea. Before this season's Cincinnati v. Cleveland game, the senior police officer on duty said that it would be a normal match. He expected more than 100 arrests, lots of fights and disorderly behaviour because of intoxication. Not a single match here this season has caused anything like those problems. The Minister should look less towards the foreign situation and more towards the actions of his own Government with regard to the impact of identification cards on attendances.

A comparison with the arts is realistic, given the introduction of charges for entry to museums. As with football, they create an additional barrier between the public and, in this case, the exhibition of historic treasures. Admissions to the national maritime museum fell by 36 per cent. in the first year following the introduction of charges. At the natural history museum, they fell by 40 per cent., and the science museum has just budgeted for a similar 40 per cent. loss. A 40 per cent. drop would be the death knell for most football clubs.

The Minister for Sport did not discuss the problem with football supporters' clubs when the working party was set up. Rather belatedly, the other day, he lectured them; he did not listen to them. Had he listened to real football supporters, he would have come to quite a different conclusion.

I shall conclude my remarks by quoting a gentleman who, I am sure, is no supporter of the Labour party. He is from Guildford in Surrey. He wrote:

"My objections are on grounds of gross infringement of my freedom of choice, what to do with my leisure time on a Saturday afternoon. I happen to be chairman of the local British Legion branch here in Surrey. I was at the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert hall. And as the poppy petals fluttered down I asked myself how many of the 300,000 men who died or were wounded (in Flanders alone; enough men to fill Wembley stadium three times over) would have dreamed that they were fighting and dying for a country which, by the year 1988, would be making such a demand of its 'free' citizens"

He went on to say:

"aided and abetted by a Prime Minister in her third term whose Falkland virtues of steadfastness and determination are now being turned against innocent citizens in her own country."

As hon. Members can imagine, that person is hardly a supporter of the Labour party. He and many others like him are turning against the Government's proposed legislation, because it will do nothing to assist our national game. It will drive many clubs out of business. At the end of the day, the Minister for Sport will be known as the Minister who killed our national game. The Government will be linked with him in that act.

4.9 am

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The speech of the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) clearly showed why the Government will be getting it wrong if they proceed along the lines suggested in the Queen's Speech and bring in a Bill to introduce identity cards for football matches. He said that he was no supporter of football. He also failed to recognise the important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that this is not a football problem. We must get out of the habit of referring to it as such. The media have given that impression and regrettably the Prime Minister and others in the House have allowed it to be referred to as a football problem.

There is hooliganism and violence on the Costa Brava, on ferries, planes, trains and the Underground, in town centres and shopping precincts and in many other places. If we keep the matter in perspective—as we should for football matches—we find that it is a small percentage of the population who commit acts of violence and hooliganism. Opposition Members would not for one

moment condone acts of hooliganism, violence or vandalism. We should like such acts, wherever they are committed, to be banned and kept out the way. We would merely say that this is not a football problem.

I have been a Burnley supporter ever since the club won promotion to the first division in the first season after the war and ever since it got to Wembley. I want to give as examples two games which, for different reasons, could not have attracted such large crowds had an identity card scheme been in operation. The first game was at the end of the 1986-87 season. Burnley had to win the last game of the season to remain a member of the football league, of which it was one of the original 12 members when it was formed 100 years ago. Burnley had had a disastrous season in the fourth division with gates nose-diving because of bad results. It also had to depend on one or two other clubs losing that day if it was to survive. Burnley's gates had dropped to below 3,000 that season, yet on that day 18,000 people turned up at Turf Moor to will the team to win the game. That is what football is about, and the crowd played just as important a part as the team in Burnley's victory that day and in the club's survival.

On 29 May this year—the very last game of the football season—instead of fighting for survival, Burnley played Wolverhampton Wanderers in the final of the Sherpa Van competition at Wembley. There was a gate of 81,000 people, who came to see two fourth division clubs—of former first-division glory—fighting for the trophy. Wolves won it, 81,000 people turned up but there was not a single incident or problem. Such an attendance would not have been possible under the new regulations. We need to ensure that people can go to football matches because I believe that the casual supporter may become a regular supporter when a team is doing well. This coming weekend, many people will have their parents staying with them. If the scheme were in place, people would not be able to take their father to a football match on Boxing day —something that is part of Christmas for many people. Do we really want to prevent them from doing that?

The scheme will also create problems at the gate. Most football crowds arrive in the 10 or 15 minutes before a game. It is no good saying that the cards will take a fraction of a second to process or wipe through; those who have used credit cards and phone cards know that they do not always function. However good the computer system is, there will be failures and with thousands of people using the cards just before 3 o'clock on a Saturday, there will be chaos if the computer cannot cope. Initially, nobody with a membership card will be banned because they will not get a card if they are banned. Burnley football club has made it clear that if anyone commits violence at any of its games, whether at home or away, it will ban them for life from all Burnley games.

The legislation will cause problems. On television the Minister said that if there was a problem, the person will go through the turnstile and be stopped by stewards and police. That is based on the assumption that only the odd one will cause a problem. What will happen if at every turnstile a person is rejected and has to be challenged by stewards and the police? That will cause friction outside and will not stop problems in the grounds.

Such people are not football fans. The people who cause the problems do not watch the football match because they are not interested in it. Of course we do not want them there, but they will find a way of getting a card and they will get in. We shall have to have a skillful system that can check photographs to see whether a person has somebody else's card. The grounds will not be able to cope with a large crowd going through the turnstiles in the few minutes before the game starts.

The scheme will cause problems to many third and fourth division clubs, and even first and second division clubs will be affected. This year Burnley's gates are averaging just over 8,000. Luton, which is cited as an example of how such schemes work, has had a successful season. It reached Wembley three times, won the Littlewoods cup and its average gate was only just over 8,000. That is not enough to sustain a football club.

The legislation will sound the death knell of many clubs. I strongly believe that we want to preserve a league of 92 clubs which can move up and down the league and in which supporters can take an interest. It is regrettable that the scheme will be forced through by hon. Members who do not support football and who are encouraged by the Prime Minister, who is not a fan, but unfortunately happens to be the president of Blackburn Rovers, who are Burnley's greatest rivals. I hope that Blackburn puts pressure on the Prime Minister to think again and that the Minister will make it clear that the Government will rethink this nonsensical proposal.

4.17 am

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) for expressing anxieties about football in this debate, having been successful in the ballot. I, too, wish to speak against a compulsory identity card system for football supporters. I oppose it for many reasons, which I shall go into, but mainly because the introduction of such a mandatory scheme has nothing to do with sport. It is a direct interference in sport. The Government seek to impose a scheme which is an insult to the majority of football supporters, to 91 of the 92 league clubs and to the majority of those involved in football at all levels.

Hon. Members on both sides may ask why I believe that so firmly. It stems from my firm belief that the idea is totalitarian as it does not seek to solve any of the problems of violence in our society or accept that the Government's economic policies have widened divisions within society, which have an effect on football. Social divisions are so sharp that they affect detrimentally inner-city communities, the young and the old, the employed and the unemployed and those in the north and the south. These measures are little more than a bullish public relations exercise by a Government with virtually no personal knowledge or experience of the game. The main purpose is to divert public opinion away from some of the major problems facing people in our society, primarily caused by Government policies.

It is true that British football has a hooliganism problem, but it is not a new problem. For instance, the *Leicester Daily Mercury* reported disgraceful scenes at a Burnley *v* Blackburn Rovers match. It stated:

"the referee was mobbed at the close, the official had to be protected by the Committee and so demonstrative were the spectators that the police could not clear the field. He had to take refuge under the grandstand and subsequently in a neighbouring house. The police force was increased and eventually the referee was hurried into a cab and driven away by a howing stone-throwing mob."

That happened in 1890. Examples of hooliganism can be found throughout the 20th century.

According to another report:

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"In 1909, at Hampden Park some 6,000 spectators pulled up goalposts, fences and pay-boxes, set fire to them and danced round them in the middle of the pitch. Police, firemen and ambulancemen were stoned, fire-engines damaged and horses slashed. Police, after throwing the stones back at the rioters, finally cleared the ground at 7 o'clock at a cost of 54 constables injured and the destruction of virtually every street around Hampden. Sixty other people were also injured."

Another report states:

"Neither of the New Year's Day matches at Parkhead in 1898 or Ibrox in 1905, between Rangers and Celtic, were finished because of pitch invasions, There were also serious outbreaks of disorder in Scottish fotball in 1941, 1949, 1953, 1955, 1957 and 1958 and on into the 1960s. The disorder in these cases consisted of fighting, bottle-throwing and pitch invasions in addition to ritual chanting, obscenities and jeering. In fact *The Glasgow Herald* wrote in 1952: 'This hooliganism on the sports field cannot be allowed to go on. The sport of football must be cleared up'."

It is, therefore, not a new problem and it does no good to the sport for the Government—especially the Minister responsible for sport—to keep harping on publicly about it. In the same way as I condemn the television companies and the rest of the media for some of the ways that they have reported such events, especially in the recent past, the Government cannot be excused for their approach to the problem, which has done little more than highlight the active hooligans in their behaviour.

The 1986 Popplewell inquiry into crowd safety and control of sports grounds said it all when it said:

"There are three popular fallacies about hooliganism. Firstly, that it is something comparatively new, secondly, that it is only found at soccer matches and thirdly, that it is an English disease."

Anyone viewing some of the Italian crowd at the Heysel stadium disaster, subsequent behaviour at Windsor park races or, indeed, for that matter Henley boating regatta last year, will understand what I mean.

We must also accept that violence at football matches is not at the behest of the majority of decent loyal supporters. Everyone inside and outside of the game must take a share of the blame—the Government, perhaps, for their economic policies or the present, and past Governments for their willingness to bask in the glory of individual success in sport, or to scream at its demise after tragic or wrongful events. The blame must be shared inside the game. Professor John Hargreaves aptly described the situation in his book "Sport Culture", when he said:

"Professional fouls, rows between players and officials, violence around football, power struggles and financial scandals in the board rooms, revelations about breaches of amateur status, the growing problem of drugs used in sports, the spatial representations of class divisions in seating arrangements at football grounds, executive boxes and seating accommodation in the stands versus the uncovered caged terrorists at the ends."

All those factors and others add to the problems of violence in sport, especially in football. The only two significant trends in football spectating in recent years have been declining audiences and the worsening ground behaviour.

Another reason for the problems might be the current state of British soccer, which might be as much to blame for the nonsense that occurs. Perhaps the Minister with responsibility for sport should pay a little attention to how our international squads do in various competitions. If he did we might not have some of the outrageous scenes that we have witnessed on the continent.

There can be no doubt that a problem exists, but everyone who cares about soccer wants to solve it. I have yet to speak to anyone connected with the sport, however, apart from those involved with Luton Town football club and the chief constable of Greater Manchester, who favour the Government's current solution. John Stalker, the former deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester who now advises Millwall on security matters has said: "the harder and heavier the policing, the more they want to pit themselves against it. Identity cards are no solution. In fact in big cities and other places where groups of fans could come across each other outside the ground, it is a positively dangerous idea."

Mr. Pendry: I have followed what my hon. Friend has said carefully and he has been talking a great deal of sense. Does my hon. Friend consider that it is somewhat odd that he is making his speech but that the Minister responsible for sport is not present to listen to it? The Minister is responsible for the proposed legislation, but had he listened to my hon. Friend and others he might not have introduced it in the first place.

Mr. Meale *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I should remind the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) that debates of this nature should not relate to legislation.

Mr. Meale: I note your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Every football league club chairman to whom I have spoken opposes the idea of identity cards. They all consider it to be absolute stupidity. Every player dreads it as it could result in the shortening of their already limited playing careers because of club closures or restrictions on club finances to pay wages. Every police chief to whom I have spoken—apart from the chief constable of Greater Manchester—who is concerned with providing police cover for matches believe that the proposal is totally unworkable. Every football supporter I have met has decribed the measure as a hooligans' charter and the fulfilment of the hooligan purpose of causing havoc on Saturday afternoons.

I urge the Minister with responsibility for sport to start again in his search for a solution. If the Minister will do nothing else, he should come to my club, Mansfield Town. It is a third division club and it it not one of the biggest in Britain, nor does it have the great history of Burnley FC in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Minister of Burnley (Mr. Pike) who spoke eloquently about the history of football.

In recent times, Mansfield Town has striven to beat hooliganism in a positive way. It has done so by introducing a voluntary membership scheme; by working with youngsters in the community; by promoting a sound youth policy in the club. It has also provided a family stand and enclosure that has been sponsored by the local newspaper *The Chad* and it offers cut-price tickets to families. It has created and promoted excellent liaison between the police authority, the club and its supporters. It has bothered to get the help of the Football Trust and the Football Ground Improvements Trust to better facilities and install closed circuit television in the Fieldmill ground.

It is no good the Minister saying that clubs such as Mansfield will not have to face any financial loss. I have to

admit that if he gave such a guarantee tonight I should be more than happy to accept it. Such a promise would help. Clubs like Mansfield Town cannot afford to lose supporters because of the inconvenience that such a measure would cause. A company has been reported today as being willing to step in with £34 million—perhaps the Minister will say something about that tonight. I understand that the company in question is the credit card firm American Express. I hope that the Minister will tell his hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport that that will not do for Mansfield. It is just no good. We want adequate support from the community, with supporters paying for their club to continue.

The proposal is incredibly unfair. As an example of that I quote a press release sent to hon. Members from the Department of the Environment by the Minister responsible for sport on 9 November 1988. The Minister hits the nail on the head. He said of the investigation:

"Its objectives were to review the main principles of the scheme and to identify appropriate technology to implement it."

So the idea was not to discover whether the scheme was a good proposal—it was merely to implement it.

Paragraph 4 of the same letter reads:

"The link between hooliganism and football is still there . . . The central premise of the scheme is that no-one will be able to go to a match without a valid membership card."

That is untrue; since the scheme was introduced, the Minister has made it plain that there will be exemptions for VIPs visiting football clubs around the country. But what is good enough for VIPs should, in my opinion, be good enough for the ordinary football supporter who goes to football matches every week—rain, snow or hail.

I request the Minister once again to ask the Minister responsible for sport to return to all who are involved in football and other sports—the police, the players the local authorities and the football supporters—and to stop this stupid Bill, so that we can find a more workable and proper solution to the problem. If he will not do that, I ask him at least to guarantee that second, third and fourth division clubs will face no financial loss over the coming years as a result of the scheme. Only in that way will the 91 league clubs who are against the legislation have a future.

4.33 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) who said that he had been watching league football since the war, I reflected that I, too, had been watching if for 42 years. I tried to remember how many incidents of violence —as opposed to witnessing arrests from a distance—I had seen in that time. I can think of only three. One involved some Burnley supporters at Chesterfield, who were swinging on the barrier dressed as Red Indians. I doubt whether that was an offence that warranted arrest.

I once saw people fighting in the stand at a Sheffield Wednesday v Liverpool match. I was on the Kop, where I heard people saying that an upper-class punch-up was taking place.

The only other incident I saw which was anything like those related by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) occurred at a non-league match at which Easington played Sunderland A. The Easington crowd refused to let the referee off the pitch at the end and chased him around throwing mud at him. Sunderland were winning 1-0 at half time, but Easington won the match 2-1. These were the only violent incidents I have observed in a great deal of time spent watching football.

Several hon. Members have tabled questions about football, and I refer to three—two from the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and one from me. On 9 November at column 186, the hon. Member for Hendon, South received a written answer from the Minister for Sport giving details for the 1987-88 season of matches played and total arrests by division. In the first division there were 5·5 arrests per game; in the second, 4·4; in the third, 1·7; and in the forth, 1·9. That is hardly a massive problem that requires legislation to resolve it as opposed to present measures, which include television surveillance. There were 6,147 arrests in total. It sounds a great deal —it is about the average crowd at a Burnley football match. But Burnley play 23 home league games in a season, and there are 92 league clubs. If one relates the number of arrests to the total attendances, it becomes much more insignificant. It is no more significant than the number of cases of salmonella poisoning caused by eggs. Although there is a problem, we do not need measures that will frighten people and destroy football.

The second answer to the hon. Member for Hendon, South appears at column 628 of *Hansard* on 14 December and states that the statistics came from

"the Association of Chief Police Officers which collates statistics on arrests and ejections from football liaison officers at police forces throughout the country."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. *628*.]

If such statistics are readily available to the Department of the Environment, it is surprising that it took the Department so long to answer my question, which was tabled on 1 December. I did not receive an answer until 19 December, and then only after raising the matter in the House at business questions.

My question asked whether the Minister would list English league football clubs, together with the number of matches played at their grounds, the total season's attendance, the total arrests in association with such matches, the average attendance per match, the average number of arrests per match and the arrests as a proportion of attendance. I also asked him to make a statement about the number of charges and convictions that have arisen from such arrests. Eventually, I received an answer stating:

"Comparable figures are not available for charges nor for convictions arising from arrests."

It is surprising that such information is not also supplied by football liaison officers. It is obvious that the number of convictions does not match the number of arrests.

The answer goes on to say, in a defensive way, that the statistics do not tell the whole story and that other matters should be mentioned. It says:

"Neither the ejections nor arrests reflect the substantially greater number of incidents of violence, hooliganism and vandalism at football league grounds. Furthermore, the police view remains that many matches provide the focus for aggressive and provocative behaviour, with violence never far below the surface."

We are no longer talking about real violence, but about metaphysical violence. Dark looks and dirty thoughts must be taken into account when examining the statistics. That has to be done because the statistics are so inadequate. Over 75 per cent. of the 92 league clubs have records of fewer than five arrests per match. The subsequent charges will be considerably fewer than that. Only Scarborough and Exeter have arrest rates of over one

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

per thousand for last season. Scarborough was a new club in the fourth division and many of those arrests took place in the first two games that the team played.

The following teams have only one arrest per 10,000 spectators: Charlton, Norwich, Spurs, Watford, Manchester City, Oldham, Plymouth, Reading, Bury, Northampton, Preston, Wigan, Darlington, Leyton and Swansea. However, half of those clubs will be threatened by any move to introduce identity cards. The other week my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield and I went to the Chesterfield-Mansfield game. Those two clubs have fewer than one arrest per match and are the type of teams that will be vulnerable following the change. Why should the overwhelming majority of third and fourth division clubs face bankruptcy when they have fewer than two arrests per match? Even 90 per cent. of first and second division clubs, where there is far more support, have fewer than 10 arrests per match.

Like the vast majority of football fans, I deplore violence at grounds and am aware of the many measures that have been introduced to enable the police to handle the situation more readily. The notion put forward by the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) that police will no longer be required when plastic cards are introduced is incredible. The Minister is, however, blowing the whole matter up out of proportion as there are probably far more arrests outside nightclubs on a Saturday night than there are in football grounds.

I have been watching league football matches for 42 years. The first match that I saw was Sunderland against Grimsby in the first division. Sunderland had two arrests per 10,000 spectators last season and Grimsby nine arrests per 10,000 spectators. I have visited 30 of the 92 league grounds and would now call myself a casual supporter, but along with many others, I would stop going to matches. I shall not be going into any executive boxes to avoid providing an identity card and I would object to having to carry a passbook into the ground. Many other people will share that feeling. The statistics given in the answer that I have quoted show that the proposal is nonsense.

4.42 am

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I should like to take the opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on making sure that we had this debate. I only wish that he could have used his considerable influence to have arranged it earlier in the day. However, we have had an interesting debate. The House agrees that no one likes violence. I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) reaffirm that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone made a number of comments about the Police Federation's belief that the scheme will not work. He referred to many of the practical problems of crowds at turnstiles, what will happen if the photograph on the card does not correspond with the face and who will deal with such problems—the stewards or the police. Those are matters of concern for the police and certainly for my excellent club, Hull City, as I have discovered from my discussions with police officers and directors of the club.

The debate is not about the report on identity cards, as you Madam Deputy Speaker said earlier. We are debating the broader issue of public order and that is why the home affairs spokesmen are present tonight on the Front Benches.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) is still in the Chamber. I do not like to attack hon. Members, but I was dismayed by the hon. Gentleman's speech. He spoke with great sincerity and his logic was impeccable; the lawyer's mind was evident. However, I found his remarks about the cost of policing quite staggering. He said that most of the cost is covered by ratepayers and not by the clubs. As the core of this debate is about public order and the Government's failure to get to grips with law and order, according to the logic used by the hon. Member for Banbury, one could argue that central Government should be paying the costs of policing instead of the ratepayers or the clubs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) spoke with great authority as he is the chairman of the all-party football committee. We all listened with profound interest to what he said and in particular to his comment that possibly many clubs will go into liquidation and will have to close because of the impact that the scheme will have on gates. Many clubs are on the margin. If gates are reduced by 10, 15 or 20 per cent., many clubs will fail. That would be very sad.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde put his finger on the central issue. He referred to the national situation with regard to violent crime. The Government have failed miserably, and, although Ministers talk about combating crime, it is obvious from the level of violence that the Government are failing dismally. This debate is not about football. It is about violent crime in this country. The idea of dealing with the problem by playing around with identity cards is quite absurd.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) raised a very interesting point. He explained that, because the Government are failing in their policy of law and order to combat crime, the Prime Minister is involved on a steering committee to draw up proposals on identity cards. It is remarkable that the Prime Minister should be involved in such a matter, but that shows that the issue is central. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield was right to claim that the cards are a diversion. The Government's law and order policy is failing and therefore they are using footbal as a scapegoat.

The conclusion that we can draw from today's debate is that unquestionably there is a lack of confidence in the Government's proposed measures to deal with public order and football. The Police Federation, the supporters, club directors and others lack confidence in the scheme and if it goes ahead it will destroy a considerable part of the game for reasons that are the responsibility not of clubs, but of the Government who are trying to get their national policy on law and order right.

This is a sad day for football. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) adequately and eloquently emphasised that the problem exists in Spain, on the street, and even at Henley regatta. Even the Conservative party conference has been cited. The hon. Member for Banbury laughs, and I can understand why he does, but it is a serious matter that there was violence at the Conservative party conference; it is not just a matter of football violence. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire,

North-East spoke of there being more violence outside certain night clubs than there is at football grounds. The statistics prove him to be right. Why is so much emphasis being placed on football when the national crime aggregate exceeds that of football violence many times over? The reason, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield suggests, is that it creates a diversion.

Although we are not here dealing with Government business, clearly there is a difference of opinion between the Conservative and Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Banbury spoke of trying to break the link between football and violence but I am convinced that attempting to do so with an identity scheme of the kind proposed is fallacious. I may add, without wishing in any way to be partisan, that until the Government get to grips with law and order generally, the problems within our football stadia and elsewhere will continue.

This debate has been interesting and has put the arguments on the table. The Government clearly should get off the back of football and instead get to grips with the problem of violent crime. The Government's law and order policies are failing the country, and for them to use football in the way that they are only damages the game. It is a game of which we are proud. It is our national sport. We on the Opposition Benches stick by our national sport, and we shall back it. Why do not the Government back football by getting off its back and tackling high crime levels? When they do that, we shall be on the way to improving the situation at our football grounds.

4.52 am

The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Perhaps it is fortunate that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) began his speech at 4.42 am, because had he made it at a more respectable time, there would have been more right hon. and hon. Members present in the Chamber to laugh at him. In truth, his speech was complacent, foolish, off the mark, and trivial.

It was trivial because the hon. Gentleman endeavoured to play down the level of football violence; because he tried to dissociate football from violence, which is not the correct thing to do; and because he failed to appreciate any of the substantial measures taken by the Government, in terms both of national law and order policies and, in particular, of those to be adopted at sports grounds.

Having listened to the debate for nearly one and one half hours, I may say that the only speaker who made any sense was my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry). The Opposition's failure to appreciate the depth of public anxiety is disgraceful. Their failure to recognise the clubs' inability to solve their own problems is regrettable, as is their failure to recognise the burdens imposed upon the police. I was struck most of all by the Opposition's wholly unconstructive and complacent attitude to the problems in question.

That cannot be said of the Government, who have already introduced a range of measures. It was clear to anyone who listened to Opposition Members' speeches as carefully as I did that, although it was not expressly stated, they accepted by implication that a number of measures promoted by the Government had been profoundly helpful. It might have been a good idea for them to state that in plain terms, for it would have added a certain credibility to the otherwise incredible.

Let me remind the House of some of the Government's measures. We begin with the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Act 1985, which established firm controls on the sale and possession of alcohol at grounds and on football special coaches and trains. I remember that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and I had an interesting debate about three years ago. There was an unholy alliance between us. I disliked the way in which the measure was carried through late at night and so did he, although my recollection is that he opposed most of its provisions. The difference between us is that I recognised that the Bill was a good thing, and I am delighted to say so. I do not remember the hon. Gentleman acknowledging that.

Mr. Pendry *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No, I shall not give way.

We must recognise that that legislation was extremely helpful, as was the Public Order Act 1986, which has also had certain important consequences for football. It provided new offences of disorderly conduct and possession of fireworks or smoke bombs at matches, and provided the courts with the power to make exclusion orders prohibiting attendance at certain matches by convicted football hooligans. Exclusion orders have been a useful addition, but they are of only limited effectiveness in enforcing someone's exclusion.

Those two important pieces of legislation were carried through by the Government in the face of considerable opposition from the Labour Benches. We all now recognise that they have made a great difference to the effort to reduce violence at football matches. I have a shrewd suspicion that our membership schemes will have the same result. Labour Members will bang away in their normal boring and unconstructive way about how hopeless and useless such measures are, and in about three years' time, with long faces and a considerable lack of self-regard, they will have to admit that our legislation has been rather helpful and say that they are sorry that they said such beastly things about it.

We have also encouraged the police by improving the exchange of information between forces in the planning of policing of matches. Liaison between the police and football authorities has also been improved, and the introduction of closed-circuit television has been of great value.

Inevitably much of our debate has centred on the football membership scheme. The working party's report has recommended the introduction of a national membership scheme which will permit the exclusion from football grounds of known trouble-makers. Let us reflect for a moment on what is involved. The requirement to obtain a membership card is no doubt a slight inconvenience, although I think that the objections to it have been grossly exaggerated, but it strikes me that no Opposition Member has grasped or appreciated the enormous value that football clubs can obtain from such a scheme. Let us start with the obvious one: if we are able by this method to exclude known trouble-makers from the grounds—which is what I think will happen—the grounds will become infinitely more attractive to ordinary people, who will over a period of time attend in ever-increasing numbers.

I am amazed by the Opposition's unconstructive approach to these matters. For the first time ever clubs will

[Mr. Hogg]

have a comprehensive list of their members for whom they will be able to provide far more facilities than ever before. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West is babbling on but he is incapable of realising that the Government are offering to the football industry a unique opportunity not just to attract more and different people to their grounds but to provide facilities that they have never previously contemplated. An orderly environment, the possession of membership lists and the certainty and confidence that that will give to their members is a new beginning for football——

In accordance with MR SPEAKER'S *Ruling*—*[Official Report,* 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—*the debate was concluded.*

European Community

5 am

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am very grateful to have this opportunity to raise a subject that is crucial to this country and to western Europe as a whole—the future of the European Community. Europe has embarked upon a great enterprise. We embarked upon it somewhat belatedly. In recent years, however, we have made an important contribution to it. Our future is entirely bound up with that great enterprise.

I am, however, concerned about the general management and co-ordination of Her Majesty's Government's policy for the development of the European Community. My concern is encapsulated in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Bruges on 20 September. I do not quarrel with the major points that my right hon. Friend made, but I am concerned about the impact of her speech.

My right hon. Friend's speech contained five principles. Her first principle was willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states. Who could quarrel with that? Few of us wish to see the creation of a federal state of Europe. We want to maintain our sovereign, independent states. However, we must surely wish to emphasise the need for active co-operation.

My right hon. Friend's second principle—she referred to it as the guiding principle—was that Community policies must tackle the problems in a practical way. I can only say amen to that.

My right hon. Friend's third principle was that Community policies should encourage enterprise. This country's experience during the last 10 years demonstrates that that approach generates wealth and promotes the wellbeing of our people. We must therefore continue to promote, by means of the European Community, policies that foster enterprise.

My right hon. Friend's fourth principle was that Europe should not adopt a protectionist policy. There has been growing concern in the rest of the world about the development of a fortress Europe. I am glad that the recent Rhodes comuniqué suggested that those concerns are fully appreciated by all the member countries of the EEC. We are therefore on the way to avoiding the threat to world trade that a fortress Europe policy would pose.

My right hon. Friend's fifth principle was that Europe must continue to maintain a sure defence through the mechanism of NATO. At a time when we must take very careful account of the pressures that are generated in international politics by the developments in the Soviet Union, that must be right. We all share the great desire for the words of President Gorbachev to be translated into action and reality. Until that is done, the majority of British people well understand the importance of maintaining a sure defence, and that can be achieved only through NATO.

I have no quarrels with the five principles enunciated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Bruges. However, I certainly have a strong quarrel with the effect and the impact of that speech and subsequent speeches and actions by Her Majesty's Government in regard to our co-operation with the European Community.

There is no doubt that the Bruges speech was very popular in Britain. That is not entirely a matter for congratulation among my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Sadly, even today, what I would call an Uncle Matthew spirit remains in the British populace. The House will recall in the novels of Nancy Mitford a splendid character called Uncle Matthew who spent a great deal of his time chanting that "wogs begin at Calais".

It is sad and regrettable that, despite the internationalisation that has taken place in the past two or three decades, that sentiment is still all too strong among the electorate in Britain. While there is a fundamental understanding of the need for international co-operation, and, as has been demonstrated on a number of occasions, a fundamental appreciation that we belong to Europe and must continue to co-operate with western Europe, just below the surface remains the Uncle Matthew tendency. There is no doubt that the impact of the Bruges speech was to appeal to the Uncle Matthew vote in Britain.

It should have given a lead to the nation and a signal to our European partners that we are determined to make a pre-eminent contribution to the development of the European Community, in particular to the moves which were required to achieve the objectives for 1992. Sadly, the impact and impression, as opposed to the content of the Bruges speech, encouraged those who have never accepted membership of the European Community. Although the overwhelming majority in Britain recognise that our future must lie in a close relationship with Europe while retaining our sovereignty, that small minority has consistently rejected that democratic decision. That anti-European element was given a great boost by the impact of the Bruges speech. We have seen it in the House.

The Bruges speech also dismayed our friends in the European Community, those whose general approach to the affairs of the European Community, and whose objectives, are virtually identical to ours. That does not apply to every member of the Community. That would be impossible to achieve. It would not be sensible to expect it in a Community of 12 nations, perhaps three of which have notionally Socialist Governments, although the term "Socialism" is arguable and has a variety of meanings in different countries. In general, our friends among our Community partners were seriously discomforted by the impact of the Bruges speech and the attitudes which it revealed. It makes it more difficult for them to co-operate with us item by item in the various issues and debates on which we need their support.

Another effect of the new attitude of challenge and, one might say, agnosticism, to some aspects of the move towards closer co-operation with our European partners has been the confusion of British business. I pay tribute to the achievements of the Department of Trade and Industry over the past 12 months in alerting British industry to the demands, opportunities and challenges of 1992. I am advised that our European Community partners regard our achievements as a model of how it should be done. We used to spend our time denigrating ourselves—we still have traces of that tendency—and believing that other countries were ahead of us and doing things better. I am delighted to say that in developing awareness of the significance of 1992, other European countries have recognised the British Government's achievements, particularly the Department of Trade and Industry and that has brought other Europeans to Britain to learn how it should be done.

It is regrettable that British industry is confused. I have experience of that over a wide range of contacts throughout British industry. One Government Department is committed and enthusiastic about the principle of developing the single market and our European contacts, but significantly different noises are emerging from No. 10 and No. 11 Downing street. It is not surprising that that has led to the impression of incoherence in Government policy, which is damaging to United Kingdom interests.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Hear, hear.

Mr. Whitney: It is always embarrassing for me to find support from the Labour party. Its attitude to Europe does not bear a moment's consideration, as it is confused and weak, so it is all the more regrettable that my party appears to be falling into some of the traps in which the Labour party has been wallowing for many years and from which it shows no sign of escaping.

I am far from advocating total acceptance of everything that comes from Brussels or everything put to us by our European Community partners. As a past member of the diplomatic service and a Minister in the Foreign Office, I am aware of the extraordinary difficulties and complexities involved in dealing with the Community. It would be strange were it to be otherwise. There are 12 nations with many historical and cultural differences and many different national economic interests. However, the frustrations and challenges of welding together the European Community must be more than worth while.

It is crucial to Britain's future as well as that of western Europea to maintain the impetus of the Europen Community. Conservative Members understand—I am not sure about Opposition Members—that the broad forces of history mean that if western Europe is to compete with the north American complex, the Japanese and the Pacific rim complex, it must continue to develop a high level of co-operation. The slog of day-to-day negotiation, in which Ministers and Government officials are involved in Brussels and elsewhere, must be continued issue by issue and boring point by boring point, and I should like to claim a deep appreciation of those difficulties.

The impression is being given that we are making those difficulties greater than they need be. We should offer a more flexible approach to frontiers and consider extremely positively the possibility of national identity cards, which has many attractions and links with the previous debate about the problems of football hooliganism. Paragraph 6 of the working party's report on football hooliganism specifically excluded examination of the issue of identity cards, as it was outside its terms of reference. I strongly urge the Government to give early and positive consideration to that possibility, which would bring benefits to many sectors, including the reduction of frontier controls, which must surely be one of the major elements of the single European market, to which we are committed and which has such clear advantages for the United Kingdom.

The same positive spirit is required in our approach to the complex issues of the harmonisation of VAT rates and excise duties. The same applies to the long-running question of our participation in the European monetary system. The issue will be given greater impetus as we approach the 1990s and the complete freeing of exchange controls. The Government, with foresight and courage, led the way nine years ago by abolishing exchange controls.

[Mr. Whitney]

We are all aware of the opportunities offered to the City of London and the financial services sector, which is so vibrant and dominant.

The issue of European monetary co-operation must surely be tackled. For many years the Government have said that it will be considered when the time and exchange rate are right. As hon. Members have said, the pound has been high and low, but at some point we must judge the time to be right; we cannot postpone a decision for much longer. Given the propensity to inflation, which seems so deep-seated in Britain, it would be a particular benefit to take a positive approach to the greater harmonisation and involvement of Britain's economy and financial institutions with those of Europe. We can avoid the dangers while receiving the benefits.

I am deeply concerned about the lack of coherence in Government policy, some of the negative aspects of which have been revealed on a depressingly personal basis. We may not agree with the contributions of Lord Cockfield or Mr. Delors, but in matters in respect of which there is a broad historical sweep of near-inevitability, we must not miss the bus out of some pique or apprehension about the influence of one individual. The issues at stake are far greater than that.

Part of the responsibility for the dangers that I see emerging must rest with this Chamber. Frankly, the House and the country have never seriously become engaged in the basic issues of Europe, as several other European Community partners have done. We saw the manifestation of that in the results of the central Hampshire European parliamentary by-election. I am delighted to say that the Conservative candidate won, but I understand that he won on a vote of 12 per cent. of the electorate. A vote of such derisory proportions is very sad.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): We were second.

Mr. Whitney: To be second out of a vote of 12 per cent. is not something from which even the Labour party, in its present desperate state, should take comfort.

I take it that we—even the Labour party—are now somewhat mildly committed to the European concept. Only 12 per cent. of the voters of central Hampshire decided to turn out. We must attach blame to the Chamber as a whole. All hon. Members know that, for many years now, the appearance on the Order Paper of European Community documents X, Y and Z has been the death knell of serious debate. We all know that, at the maximum, 12 hon. Members are regular attenders at such debates. There are perhaps two hon. Members who risk giving the impression that they will accept anything from Brussels, unseen and unsigned, and that they will accept anything that Brussels says. It is a false impression, but it is one that they risk having attributed to them.

There are half a dozen or perhaps 10 hon. Members who are part of the small minority in the country who have simply never accepted the judgment of the electorate of this country that we are part of Europe, that we must make a firm contribution to it and make a leading contribution to the development of co-operation with our European allies. The cause of moderation, of pragmatism, of balance, of criticising some things, of explaining everything and accepting most of what comes from Brussels is left to the unfortunate inhabitant of the Government Front Bench at the time. The rest is silence. The mechanisms of the House should be used more effectively.

I fully accept my personal share of the blame. We should no longer abandon European debates to excessive enthusiasts—the excessive anti-Europeans and pro-Europeans. The voice of the solid centre—I claim to be a member of it—needs to be heard much more. We must not leave the matter to the fanatics on both sides of the House.

In particular, it is time for the Government to take another look at their overall position as we move to 1992 and to co-ordinate and cohere more effectively to actions across the spectrum to take account of the fact that we signed the Single European Act. From some Ministers' statements, one might from time to time infer that they have not read the Single European Act. Anyone would think that they had taken the country through it in a fit of oblivion, without understanding majority voting and all that was implied. The fact is that we signed the Single European Act; we understood it.

The Conservative party has a tradition of commitment to the European concept that has lasted for decades. That does not mean that we accept every daft idea—every social harmonisation proposal—that comes out of Europe. If we risk being caricatured as adopting a generally carping and negative attitude to the principles of co-operation, we make it much more difficult to achieve the objectives that we must achieve. We make it much more difficult to defend British interests if we appear to be negative. We also make it more difficult for our friends in Europe to help us to achieve those objectives.

Let us look again at the signature of the Single European Act. It might be thought that some wicked, slippery, devious members of my former service, the diplomatic service, somehow slipped the measure through. I do not think that that is likely; I have too much respect for my right hon. Friends in the Government to believe that that can possibly have happened.

I pin most of my hopes on a very important memorandum that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister addressed to her colleagues in August 1984. The Government as a whole would do well to take that memorandum out of the archives and dust it down. They should confirm that the principles enunciated in it remain the mainspring of the Government's approach to Europe and to the task of achieving the goals of 1992.

My right hon. Friend made it very clear that what was needed was

"a series of new policies to promote the economic, social and political growth"

on which the future well-being of the Community depended. She said:

"This means giving greater depth to the Community in both its internal and external activities."

She spoke of the need to create

"a genuine common market in goods and services which is envisaged in the Treaty of Rome"

but said that that could be achieved only by

"a sustained effort to remove the remaining obstacles to intra-Community trade."

Only by that means could we enable

"the citizens of Europe to benefit from the dynamic effects of the fully integrated common market with immense purchasing power."

My right hon. Friend spoke about the need to co-operate on environmental matters. That was four years ago, which shows that our commitment to green policies is by no means a recent innovation.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that it must be our objective

"to aim beyond the Common Commercial Policy through Political Cooperation towards common approach to external affairs."

That, too, tends to be forgotten as we concentrate on economic issues and the benefits that we rightly hope to obtain.

My right hon. Friend pointed out that the Commission was central to the functioning of the Community and that Europe needs to advance its internal development. One of the objectives that she enunciated was to

"heighten the consciousness among our citizens of what unites us."

In recent months, too much effort has been made to heighten consciousness of what divides us. We are perfectly well aware of what divides us and we need more emphasis on the positive aspects. Certainly the nation and the British business community needs it. If we are to achieve all that 1992 offers, the country needs a much more positive lead from the Government in all those areas.

5.29 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I would not wish to embarrass the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), by saying that he made a brave and interesting speech—as he did on 3 April 1982 and on several other occasions. In normal circumstances it would not have occurred to me at 5.30 am or at any other hour to protest about the appointment of a British Commissioner in the Community or even to put in for a Consolidated Fund debate on the appointment of British Commissioners.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) is probably the most academically successful Member of any British Cabinet since 1979 and arguably of any recent Administration. Moreover, as I am reminded in my many questions, alas unreached, to the Prime Minister, he has important experience of the great offices of state as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, which should be invaluable in a vice-president of the European Commission. I hope that I am not being churlish if I wonder sotto voce whether his behaviour as Home Secretary, as indicated in his first speech on capital punishment and the broadcasting authorities, gave certain doubts about his attitude and judgment.

As a member of the indirectly elected European Parliament from 1976-79, I formed the impression that attitude and judgment are extremely important if a Commissioner is to be effective with his colleagues on the Commission. I think of Finn Olav Gundelach and Guido Brunner, both extremely effective Commissioners who were guests in my constituency and whom I knew well, of Pierre Lardinois and Claude Cheysson, with whom I worked, and of my excellent working relationship with Christopher Soames and George Thomson. I say this having had four years' experience in the Parliament.

In one crucial respect circumstances are simply not normal. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has a cloud hanging over him and until such time as that cloud has been lifted——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I should remind the hon. Gentleman at this point that, to the best of my knowledge, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) is a Member of this House and the hon. Gentleman must not reflect on either his integrity or honour.

Mr. Dalyell: I thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman might have been here for a debate on the European Community. He has been appointed vice-president of the Commission and it is extremely odd that when the House of Commons debates the future of the Community he should not bother to come.

My point is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should not be going as British vice-president to the Commission, let alone as the Commissioner of financial institutions. This is neither the time nor the place to regurgitate as I did on 28 July 1986, at column 851, or on 22 April 1988, at column 1164, the details of the Westland affair. I simply remind the House that we are required to believe that over 14 days in January 1986 the right hon. and learned Gentleman behaved in such a way——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is doing precisely that against which I cautioned him. I hope that he will not make a speech aimed at denigrating the character of the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not want to denigrate anybody's character. I am sticking very carefully to fact, and the fact of the matter is that the way in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman treated his civil servants, his Cabinet colleagues and his Prime Minister about a Law Officer's letter was not acceptable to the House. If we do not believe that about the right hon. and learned Gentleman, we can only conclude that someone else was to blame for the outrageous treatment of the Solicitor-General's letter. That someone else could only be Mr. Charles Powell, Mr. Bernard Ingham and the Prime Minister herself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall not allow the hon. Gentleman to pursue that line under the debate heading that is before us. The hon. Gentleman must not use this debate to reopen such matters when, on a number of occasions, he has been cautioned about his excesses.

Mr. Dalyell: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is to go to the Commission, I think we can agree that he should go proud, that he should go clear and that he should go absolved from all blame of misleading his colleagues in Parliament on any occasion, especially during the Westland affair. As matters stand, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is the scapegoat. Nobody else is carrying the can. It is a disgrace to our country and to our Parliament that a colleague should be going to one of the most prestigious jobs in the Community—we shall leave the salary out of it—that Britain can offer any of our countrymen when this affair has not been cleared up.

There is another pertinent consideration. No other Minister on any occasion has treated a Select Committee of the House as the right hon. and learned Gentleman treated the Select Commitee on Westland. None of us who witnessed it has in our parliamentary lifetimes seen behaviour to compare with the arrogant stonewalling that the right hon. and learned Member demonstrated when he refused to answer legitimate questions put by parliamentary colleagues. Yet this is the colleague that we send——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman heard me the first time, when I said that he must not seek to make a speech that would reflect adversely on the honour or integrity of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, but he is persisting in doing precisely that. He must not persist; he must cease to do that.

Mr. Dalyell: I am just referring to his parliamentary behaviour. Surely it is legitimate to comment on the unprecedented parliamentary behaviour of a right hon. and learned Gentleman when appearing before a Select Committee of the House. We must ask why. Because the appointment is a reward forced on the Prime Minister in recognition of the greatest service that a Cabinet Minister in such circumstances can render the occupant of Downing street, and that is the supreme service—of silence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is quite clearly completely disregarding the advice that I have offered to him. If he continues to persist with the line he is pursuing, I shall have no option but to instruct him to resume his seat and terminate his speech.

Mr. Dalyell: I find that absolutely extraordinary, because the words are carefully chosen and the subject is entirely in order. What we are considering—incidentally, this is the last opportunity for consideration before his appointment—is the sending of one of our number as vice-president of the Commission, who was the recipient of a unique resignatory letter from the Prime Minister, which ended by saying:

"I hope it will not be long before you return to high office to continue your ministerial career".

The Prime Minister has never said that to anyone before. She certainly did not say it to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). This is absolutely unique. I say, as a matter of fact, that it looks to many of us that the vice-presidency of the European Commission is a second-best compromise pay-off for the promised Cabinet job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given sufficient warnings to the hon. Gentleman, but he is persisting in disregarding my advice. I have no option but to tell him to resume his seat and terminate his speech.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sorry, but—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not persist in disregarding a ruling from the Chair. I have given the hon. Gentleman an instruction, and he knows sufficiently well that he must obey it.

Mr. Dalyell: It is a quite unreasonable instruction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to debate my ruling with the hon. Gentleman. He must resume his seat, otherwise—

Mr. Dalyell: It is a quite unreasonable instruction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have no option but to instruct the hon. Gentleman to withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of this day's sitting.

Mr. Dalyell: No. That is a quite unreasonable instruction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not seek to argue with my ruling.

Mr. Dalyell: I am raising—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman disregarding my ruling?

Mr. Dalyell: I am disregarding your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it is totally unreasonable, and what is at issue—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that it might be sensible at this time of the morning—

Mr. Dalyell: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not persist in saying no to me.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I will offer some advice to the hon. Gentleman. It may benefit all of us if we reflect on what the hon. Gentleman has said and if he reflects on what he has said and on what I have ruled. I suspend the sitting for five minutes.

5.41 am

Sitting suspended.

5.49 am

On resuming—

Mr. Dalyell: On the ground that I do not wish to embarrass the Chair, because I understand that there are not enough Members here for you to name me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or in any way to inhibit my colleagues who have stayed up all night to take part in their debates, I shall withdraw to facilitate matters.

The hon. Member then withdrew.

5.50 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): This must be the only Parliament in the European Community, or in the world, that would choose to debate such an important and far-reaching subject as this at 10 minutes to six in the morning. It is perverse and almost eccentric that we should be having this debate now. I congratulate the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on securing this debate under the Consolidated Fund, but I cannot commend him on the fact that he drew a 5 am start.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said in the less controversial part of his speech, the hon. Member for Wycombe made a brave speech which, at another time of the day, might have been regarded as highly controversial. When the outside world reads *Hansard* in 48 hours' time, his speech may yet put him on the front pages.

The hon. Gentleman identified several points that are of interest to the House. I take issue with his comment that the Prime Minister's speech in Bruges was popular and that that was regrettable. I do not believe that her speech was popular. The only test of opinion on it was in a poll conducted for *The Mail on Sunday* a couple of weeks later. It showed that the Prime Minister was out of tune with what the majority of the British people think about the future of Europe. Another reason why it was not popular with the public was that it was insincere. It contrasted with her decisions in the past on the European Community, and

the British people do not easily take to the double standards represented by what she said at the College of Europe.

The hon. Member for Wycombe admitted mea culpa on not attending enough European Community debates. As one who is obliged because of his position to attend all these debates, I know that they attract only small, rarefied audiences. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that he will attend our debates and make a positive contribution to them, the whole House will thoroughly applaud it.

The hon. Gentleman said that Ministers were giving the impression of not having read the Single European Act. I spent many hours on the Floor of the House when the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, which brought the Single European Act into force, went through all its stages. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that Ministers were aware of what was going on. The Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), who sadly is not with us tonight—no one regrets that more than the Under-Secretary of State himself—knew the implications of majority voting, increased powers for the European Parliament and moves towards further political co-operation. The only person who was unaware of what the Single European Act meant was the one who agreed that it should be signed. The occupant of No. 10 Downing street is going through hoops, trying desperately to escape from the implications of what she has decided.

The notion that it was a nasty idea slipped through by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and by the subversive members of the Diplomatic Service beggars belief when we remember that the Prime Minister voted in the Lobby on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill 1986, including voting for the guillotine when the House's consideration of that vital measure was truncacted after an all-too-brief debate. There is a further irony, as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)—who has now apparently joined the ranks of CND, and clearly regrets his role in the Single European Act—was the Leader of the House who gave us the guillotine on that measure.

The hon. Member for Wycombe pinpointed the dilemma faced by the Government. That dilemma is caused by the fact that the Prime Minister acts both as Government and Opposition. She signed the Single European Act and then went to the College of Europe denouncing everything in it. She signed the Fontainebleau agreement on the future financing of the Community and shortly afterwards denounced the basis of the settlement. With a Prime Minister who can act both as Prime Minister and as Leader of the Opposition, it is far from surprising that the hon. Member for Wycombe, a Government loyalist, finds the Government's position incoherent. He is not alone in that.

Business finds that incoherence confusing and our partners in the European Community find it difficult to understand. They find it especially difficult to understand why the Prime Minister insists on labelling them all as "Socialists and standardisers", since the people whom she appears to include in that gratuitous insult include Chancellor Kohl of West Germany, a good Christian Democrat, and Prime Minister Dimita of Italy, another Christian Democrat of a Right-wing persuasion. However, they all come in for that incredible hostility and sloganising abuse to which the Prime Minister is so prone.

There is incoherence between the Prime Minister's actions in agreeing to the Single European Act and her rhetoric in denouncing it shortly afterwards when she had forced it through the House. There are also incoherences and inconsistencies in Government. The Prime Minister said in Bruges:

> "The Community . . . must not be ossified by endless regulation."

She said in the most widely quoted part of that speech:

> "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels."

On 23 November, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Wallasey, made a speech of equal importance at a management centre Europe conference on industrial relations in Europe. Apparently out of touch with her leader, she said:

> "We need progress on the agreed programme of action on health and safety at work . . . 1992 gives us a unique opportunity for concerted progress in combating unemployment. With over 15 and a half million jobless, unemployment remains the EC's biggest priority. Member state Governments must accord it the priority it deserves."

As a final, crushing blow to the Prime Minister's view of the Europe, the Minister of State said:

> "Britain is sometimes charged with having no interest in the social development of Europe. This is simply not true. There must be a social dimension to the single market."

If the hon. Member for Wycombe, who has, after all, been discarded from the Foreign Office despite his pretences at loyalism, finds the Government's actions incoherent, surely the Minister of State, who is still within the charmed magic circle, even temporarily—ladies are exiting from the Government rather quickly these days—is pointing to a more detailed contrast with what is happening.

In the lead-up to the European elections, we are beginning to see the stark contrast between the different visions of Europe. The Prime Minister's vision is one of deregulation, liberalisation and an unrestrained free market without barriers or constraints. Hers is the vision of big Europe for big business, with the weak going to the wall and the mighty flourishing and where standards of conduct and employment, whether achieved through law or negotiation, are abandoned in pursuit of profit.

In contrast to that Thatcherite vision of Europe, there is the Opposition's view of a Europe where growth is encouraged, but where balance in industry, employment and the environment is assured and guaranteed. In our view of Europe, the vulnerable regions, people, industries and firms receive protection from crude market forces. Our vision of Europe is one in which "high standards", to quote the Single European Act, in the workplace, in peripheral areas and in industrial activity is assured. For example, in research and technology the interests of the public will never be reflected in short-term drives for profit. Those areas will be set and policed by accountable public institutions.

The Prime Minister regards the European Community as a huge test bed for a continental Thatcherite experiment. If we lived in more enlightened days and the hon. Member for Wycombe was in charge of Government policy on the single market and the Labour party's views ruled rather than the more philistine values on the Government Benches, Europe would be the true and appropriate location for a real bid to ensure our children's future. It would be a Europe in which joint action by Governments could tackle unemployment and the special misery and waste of youth unemployment and where

[Mr. George Robertson]

training in skills could be achieved on a continental level to face the challenges from the United States of America and Japan.

The hon. Member for Wycombe spelt out those challenges only too eloquently. It would be a Europe of pooled resources where universities and technical centres could be harnessed to build Europe's new competitive edge. It would be a Europe in which the environmental problems that know no frontiers and which pervade our continent could, with cash and the political will, be confronted properly. That is what Europe should be about. It should not be about the narrow, short-sighted pursuit of mega-business moderated only by fashionable words, but with no action on the green issues. That latter approach singles out our Prime Minister from the more aware and socially concerned European leaders today.

So many issues arise from the debate that I do not intend to tackle them all. Perhaps in due course the Government will give us time to debate the six-monthly report of the European Community, which always disappears over the horizon every time that it appears on the agenda. However, a number of issues give cause for concern to which the Minister seconded here to do night duty on behalf of his right hon. Friend the Minister of State can give us some answers. For example, I would like to know what happened at the meeting attended by a Minister from the Department of Employment at which some decisions were taken about improving standards of health and safety.

On Saturday, *The Guardian* reported

"Britain drags feet on 'Social Europe' plans."

It appears that a British Minister stood in the way of an agreement designed to raise common health and safety standards, and that an unnamed British official—we return to the unnamed officials mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—commented that there is

"a conflict between British legal traditions and the absolute guarantees of protection against risk favoured by 'continental' governments."

That attempted sabotage by the British Government was reported last Saturday. Today's newspapers only touch on the matter, but perhaps the Minister will give the House the benefit of his superior knowledge and reveal precisely what happened at that meeting of the Council. It is so rare for the House to hear anything of Council meetings.

Can the Minister say what is the United Kingdom's response to the Court of Auditor's report on the common agricultural policy, in respect of fraud and discrepancies, which was published on 13 December? That report has two implications for the United Kingdom. First, it throws doubt on guarantees obtained by the Prime Minister at the penultimate European summit and on the legally binding guarantees on agricultural production agreed then.

The Court of Auditors identified a form of creative accountancy that the British Government would outlaw in this country, whereby the European Community manipulates its annual budget by cutting short the budget year for farm expenditure, once preset ceilings are reached. That is an ingenious scheme and one that could be adopted by local councils simply reaching their guideline totals and then declaring their financial year to be at an end. There would be no problems for local authorities if they could adopt that form of creative accountancy.

The report's second implication for the United Kingdom taxpayer is that vast amounts of money are being wasted not just because of negligence—although that accounts for a substantial proportion—but by an equal if not greater amount through fraud. A vast sum of United Kingdom taxpayers' money, as well as that of taxpayers in other member states, if being wasted as a result of sophisticated, highly lucrative and well organised fraud existing on a large scale, and identified but underestimated by the Court of Auditors. It will be interesting to know the Government's view on that subject.

Finally, will the Minister enlighten the House in respect of leaks appearing in certain newspapers, about a document arising out of the Delors committee, established at the Brussels summit to investigate monetary union? I refer to an article by Mr. Peter Norman, published in the *Financial Times* on 12 December, from which it appears that the committee reached the conclusion that certain of the Community's regions, including many of the United Kingdom's most fragile regions, risk considerable suffering if the momentum towards European monetary union gathers support at the pace being suggested by certain European maximalists.

In the *Financial Times* article, Dr. Helmut Schlesinger, deputy governor of the Bundesbank, warns that 1992 could lead to

"a further relative decline in already structurally weak regions and a deterioration in the trade balances of less competitive members of the European monetary system."

That is a serious allegation and conclusion to emerge from a committee established to take forward the momentum for European monetary union.

Although it is late in the evening, and although the Minister, like other right hon. and hon. Members, is not at his brightest, we have now a rare opportunity to secure a ministerial reply to those important questions. I hope that the Minister, when winding up, will address his mind to them, as well as to the significant points raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe.

6.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I much enjoyed listening to the fantasies of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I must say that he has worked hard in seeking to develop a sensible and coherent Opposition policy on Europe and I wish him well in his continuing fight, but his description of the Opposition view of Europe was not, I suspect, universally shared by hon. Members on the Benches behind him.

Let me first congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on his success in the ballot, while not entirely congratulating him on the timing of that success. I think that the whole House listened to his contribution with considerable interest. I remember vividly his speech in April 1982 and tonight's speech continued in the tradition which he started then. Whatever view we hold of what he said, it was a courageous and consistent speech.

Let me next deal with some of the individual points that have been made, and apologise sincerely for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, who I am sure would much rather be here at this time of the morning than attending the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels. The

House will be looking forward to the contributions by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe to the various scrutiny debates on European documents. An interesting discussion is now in progress—it is not a matter for Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—about how we manage our scrutiny and assessment of European legislation, and I am sure that that debate will continue.

My hon. Friend commented on the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in Bruges. Unlike, I suspect, the hon. Member for Hamilton, he had clearly read the speech in considerable detail, and he drew attention to the powerful points made in it. The bedrock of my right hon. Friend's speech was her clear statement that Britain's destiny is in Europe, and that Britain is as committed to the European Community as any other member country.

Of course the Europe of the future will continue to be made up of different national personalities and traditions. It is not only my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who believes that; Chancellor Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany has said clearly that the construction of Europe must not mean the suppression of national identities. All of us in Europe want to build a community that is able to ensure the future prosperity and security of its peoples in the harshly competitive world to which my right hon. Friend referred. Her message is that Europeans should work closely and effectively together on the things that we do better together, rather than on things that we do better alone.

My hon. Friend also referred to frontier controls. It will be important, because of 1992, to minimise delays at frontiers and to make travel easier for EC citizens. However, that does not mean that all frontier controls must be abolished. The EC needs a mechanism that is able to combat terrorism, crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. The Rhodes summit reaffirmed that requirement and linked the reduction of further frontier checks with more effective co-operation between member states. As a result of the Rhodes summit, national co-ordinators are to be appointed. They will be responsible for providing assistance over frontier problems.

Not for the first time, the hon. Member for Hamilton ought not to rely on reports in *The Guardian*. Agreement was reached on health and safety matters at the Council meeting last Friday. I understand that a parliamentary question is to be answered in the near future. It will comment on the outcome of the Council meeting. The hon. Gentleman was right to point out that the Council had to deal with a legal problem, but we believe that there has been a satisfactory outcome. I am sure that he will be scurrying to *Hansard* to read the answer.

The hon. Gentleman referred to progress on monetary co-operation in the so-called Delors committee. The committee's discussions continue. It is due to complete its proceedings in good time to enable the Minister for Economic Affairs and the Minister for Finance to examine the committee's recommendations before the European Council meeting in Madrid.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe said that he thought that the United Kingdom was being left behind on monetary co-operation. However, we have led the way over the abolition of restrictions on the movement of capital and exchange controls. That is a fundamental first step, and we are delighted that the rest of the Community is following our example. A practical sign of our commitment to progress is the introduction of the ecu-denominated Treasury bond. That is an important step.

The hon. Member for Hamilton, casting around for things to say—for which I do not blame him at this time in the morning—asked about the annual report of the Court of Auditors and referred to agriculture fraud. The report states that futher action needs to be taken. We intend fully to support the report. That is consistent with our approach to agriculture. We have been one of the leaders in the fight against fraud in the EC.

The hon. Member for Hamilton expressed concern about the so-called 10-month year. That was a one-off measure to which the hon. Member has referred on previous occasions. It was adopted by the Council in October 1987. At the February meeting of the Council in Brussels, a two-and-a-half month delay was agreed for the payment of advances. We believe that the Council's decision will improve budgetary control over agriculture spending.

This debate provides a valuable opportunity to assess the state of the European Community at the end of 1988 and to look briefly at some of the prospects for next year.

In 1988 we have seen major changes in the way in which the Community's finances are run. I refer in particular to the rules governing the operation of the CAP. In February, the Council reached agreement on a series of stabilisers for cereals, oil seeds and other principle agricultural commodities. The Community has given those stabilisers legal backing through a series of detailed regulations. For the first time, we now have an important automatic mechanism for controlling the growth of financial support to the agricultural sector, a signal to the outside world that we really mean to control the CAP.

The stabilisers are working. Since the summer there have been automatic price cuts for a series of crops. It is intended that there will be a 3 per cent. price cut in cereals in 1989. We have also witnessed major reductions in surplus stocks of agricultural products; for example, beef stocks have fallen by 25 per cent. during the past 12 months.

The second major element of improved budget discipline agreed last February was a legally binding financial guideline for agricultural spending. In future, spending on the CAP will be able to grow by no more than three quarters of the rate of Community GNP. That is about 2 per cent. per annum in real terms. That means that CAP support will represent a steadily shrinking percentage of the Community's GNP.

In the first budget introduced under the new procedures, provision for agriculture is fully £1·2 billion below the guideline agreed in February. I am sure that we all welcome that development.

Hon. Members may have felt something missing from their lives this year—the budget crisis which normally reverberates around the Community at this time of year. The peaceful, almost routine procedure in which the 1989 budget has been adopted is a good illustration of the way in which the Community has acknowledged the truth of a persistent United Kingdom theme that a sound Community cannot be built on unsound foundations. The future financing agreement that we secured in February at least gives the Community a sound foundation of budgetary discipline. All parties—the Commission, the Council and the Parliament—now accept that that reform was right, was long overdue and must continue.

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs]

At the Hanover European Council in June, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her colleagues agreed that progress towards the single market is now irreversible. That means that we really will have a single market with all the opportunities that that will bring for British and European business. Of course, as the House knows, there is a great deal still to be done. The Hanover Council laid down four priorities for work in the immediate future which are important for the United Kingdom.

The Greek presidency in the second half of this year has made solid progress, for example by achieving a common position on the public works directive and by opening up public procurement to competition throughout the Community. That benefits the consumer and British business. The Greeks have also put together a package of key food law measures—a matter to which we attach great importance. I hope that further progress will be made at the last internal market Council for the year which is taking place tomorrow.

The Spanish presidency will begin work in the new year with a fair wind. The priorities fixed at Hanover were confirmed at the recent Rhodes Council. There is plenty for the Spanish presidency to do, and for the French presidency that follows it.

Liberalisation, competition and deregulation must not be limited to the Community's internal affairs. The Rhodes European Council devoted considerable time to discussing the Community's role in the world. Heads of Government issued a declaration emphasising the Community's important contribution to sustaining a liberal economic and trading environment—a clear message to the world that 1992 will not lead to greater external protection as internal barriers come down. In other words, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe said, there will be no fortress Europe.

We want the single market to contribute directly to the greater liberalisation of world trade. That liberalisation is essential if the world economy is to continue to expand. The best way to pursue that aim is through multilateral negotiations in the GATT. The United Kingdom and all member states want the multilateral system to be strengthened and expanded. The current Uruguay round is essential to that process. As the House knows, we are now at the halfway point of the round. Some good progress has been made but there is still much to do.

We were disappointed when the ministerial meeting earlier this month was unable to agree on a detailed framework for negotiations on the reform of agriculture. The Community made great efforts to find common ground with the United States. However, the United States insisted on pressing for a commitment to the total elimination of agricultural support by an agreed deadline. In our view, that was not politically feasible. We trust that the new United States Administration will find it possible to be more flexible. All concerned will have to work constructively in the coming weeks if agreement is to be achieved. We shall be doing all that we can to achieve that end.

The strengthening of the financial foundations of the Community, the progress towards the single market within the Community and the challenges of GATT underline the importance to us of the way in which the Community is developing. Our commitment is not in doubt. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her Bruges speech: "our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community." One cannot have a firmer commitment than that.

At the end of a year of achievements, we can face with confidence the challenges that the Europe of 1992 will bring. In 1988 we have secured common-sense budgetary reforms and the acceleration of the drive towards the single market. Both developments have been welcomed by the majority of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Looking ahead, I see the steady development of a stronger enterprise Europe with less regulation and less interference with markets and, as a result, more growth and more jobs. I see the steady development of a Community, the growing economic influence of which is reflected in greater political influence across the world with the United Kingdom playing a prominent part.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe for drawing our attention to the Community's development, for inspiring an unusual and lively debate and for obtaining an optimistic view of the Opposition's policies in Europe from the hon. Member for Hamilton.

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Rating Reform

6.28 am

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I am glad to have the opportunity to raise the subject of the poll tax and local authority social services records. I am doubly grateful for the fact that I am able to use the words "poll tax." The authorities of the House gave permission for the "Poll Tax" to be the subject of the debate. At one time I thought that I might be forced to put a different description on the Order Paper. When I submitted my document I offered an alternative title because I did not want to be ruled out of order. I am glad that a useful precedent has been set in this debate and in the tenth debate on the Order Paper. The words "Poll Tax" can appear in the title of a debate so that people outside know what we are talking about.

I promise the Minister that before I sit down there will be one occasion on which I will be forced to refer to the poll tax as something else. The circumstances are such that I have no alternative. I shall stick to the narrow issue of social services records, but I make no apology for returning to the important issue of the poll tax, which was not fully debated during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 because it was guillotined in Committee and on the Floor of the House. There has been no discourse by the Government about their intentions or about why they are sticking to their plans for social services records, which is why, before the poll tax comes into operation, I chose the subject for debate.

There is no access for poll tax registration officers to Inland Revenue records or to those of the police, health authorities and employers—even to local authority records. All names and addresses held by a local authority's social services department are accessible to the poll tax registration officer. No doubt those records will include people reporting possible child abuse, the names and addresses of those involved in adoption cases and the names and addresses of families who, for various reasons, want their addresses kept secret, such as a woman who is regularly beaten by a man. The Government make a remarkable distinction between sensitive and non-sensitive information. I want to explore that distinction.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"We have made it clear that the power"—

the power for registration officers to have access to information—

"will be used to ensure that registration officers do not have access, for example, to social work case files and national sources of data".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 9 February 1988; c. 484.]

When the issue was raised in the other place, the Earl of Caithness said:

"Sensitive data in social services records will not be available, and rightly so."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 June 1988; Vol. 497, c. 1112.]

The Minister later said:

"It is the Government's firmly held belief that certain non-sensitive information, once it is held within a local authority, should be available to the registration officer for the purposes of compiling the register."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 29 June 1988; Vol. 498, c. 1600.]

The Minister was taking part in a debate on excluding information relating to all social services purposes. He said that both proposals were unacceptable to the Government for reasons that he had given. Social work case records will not be available, but all the names and addresses held by social services departments will be. One must contrast that with Inland Revenue records, of names and addresses only. Health authority records and employment records are so sensitive that they are not available, but names and addresses in social services records are non-sensitive and are therefore available.

This issue has nothing to do with promoting evasion or protecting evaders. The poll tax is legal and must be collected. If the issue of evasion and evaders were raised, the immediate argument would be, "Give access to employment records, to names and addresses held by the Inland Revenue and to health authority records." No argument can be made about social services departments trying to protect or promote evasion. That argument can be put out of the way straight away.

On 28 October, the Government issued draft poll tax guidelines in a hefty document which has no number because it is a draft. The consultation period lasts until 23 December—later this week. It is the first set of poll tax administration enforcement regulations—there will be others—amounting to several pages of A4. The list of recipients includes all local authority associations, the Small Landlords Association, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the British Property Federation, and all sorts of bodies, but, of course, not Parliament. As legislators, that is one of our complaints: when the regulations come before Parliament, we shall have no opportunity to amend them. That is one of the problems with delegating legislation. Although a consultation process is going on outside this place, on matters which, because the Government used the guillotine, were not properly debated in the House or in Committee, we were deprived of an opportunity to consider them. That is another reason I have raised the subject tonight.

The Association of Directors of Social Services and the British Association of Social Workers are not on the list of recipients. Obviously, they and local authority associations have had access to the draft regulations—they are not secret.

Draft regulation 6 refers to information obtainable by poll tax registration officers from public bodies. The argument is that the regulations fall far short of what is required. The regulation does not place all social service records off limits. It does not address the fact that names and addresses in social service records can of themselves constitute sensitive information. There are some circumstances in which a name and address can constitute sensitive information. There are safeguards. I would be a fool to say that there are none, having spent hundreds of hours considering the poll tax Bill.

In consultation rather than co-operation with local authority associations, the Government are producing practice notes. In particular I refer to the data protection practice note, which is practice note No. 4. In chapter 3, paragraph 4, there is discussion of the Data Protection Act 1984 and the exemptions for personal data from disclosure provisions. Paragraph 3.6 of the practice note states:

"In addition to these exemptions there are a series of partial exemptions from the disclosure and access procedures set out in the Data Protection Act. Section 28(1) specifies that information held for three purposes below may be liable for special treatment. The purposes are:

(a) the prevention or detection of crime
(b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders
(c) the assessment or collection of any tax or duty.

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

Information held for these purposes is exempt from the 'subject access' and 'non disclosure provisions' of the Act where the application of those provisions would be likely to prejudice any of the purposes. Similarly the Act provides that data is exempt from the First Data Protection Principle in any case where its application would be likely to prejudice any of the purposes."

Paragraph 3.7 consists of one sentence. It is useful to put it on the record. It states:

"It should, however, be noted that the community charge will not, according to legal advice received by the authors, fall within the definition of a tax or a duty as provided for in section 28(1) of the 1984 Date Protection Act."

The preface to the practice note also refers to general data protection guidelines for the registration officers in England and Wales. Paragraph 3(e) makes it clear that individual citizens must be told that the information that they give can be required by the poll tax registration office:

"If there is a possibility that the information held for another purpose will be disclosed to the CCRO"—

the community charge registration officer—

"then wherever possible the individuals concerned should be informed that this might be the case."

That is crucial, because it means that a local authority social service department can never say to a client or informant that it can offer complete confidentiality. In fact, the reverse is true. The practice note and the data protection principle make it quite clear that local authority social service departments must inform anyone who approaches them—client or informant—that their name and address can be made available to the poll tax registration officer.

That brings me to the Government propaganda leaflet published last week, entitled "You and the Community Charge—Your Step by Step Guide". It is incredible. Page 2 says:

"You will almost certainly have read about the new community charge in the papers, or heard about it on television. You will probably have seen it called the poll tax, but the community charge is its real name."

Before one even reaches the list of contents, one reads:

"The booklet is quite detailed and you may not want to read all of it. You will find it helpful to read pages 6-14, however, as these apply to almost everyone."

For the purpose of this debate, I shall stick to page 11, which deals with the transfer of information. It answers the question, "Will Registration Officers be able to get information from anywhere else?" having mentioned the electoral register and so on. It says:

"The inquiry form will be the main source of information for Registration Officers. They will not be able to approach the Inland Revenue, for example, or to use any sensitive information (such as confidential records held by police authorities). They will be able to refer to other local authority records, but only for the information that they need for the register."

The only information that they need for the register is a person's name and address, his age and the length of time that he has lived at a given address. But they will require more than names and addresses. The booklet refers to sensitive information. This House has a right to complain —perhaps the other place has greater cause for complaint —that no mention is made of sensitive social service information. People are advised to read pages 6 to 14 of the pamphlet as the rest will probably be too boring, but the pamphlet really should have said something about sensitive social service information. Page 11 gives one the strong impression that the Government are allowing open season on social service records. I do not think that that is what they wanted to do, but that will be the effect of their proposals.

Let me give a few examples to show how social service records giving a person's name and address, and his age or the length of time for which he has lived at an address contain information that is sensitive in itself irrespective of the details.

I shall give the House five brief examples. Many social workers are located in hospital social work departments. In the inner-city part of my constituency is the Birchfield medical centre. It is first-class and doctors and health service personnel from other areas queue to visit Dr. Pike and his colleagues. Indeed, the Home Secretary has visited it for a private briefing. They have a research effort, foot doctors, a link with the university and social workers attached who are employed by the local authority. That means that the social workers share information with their medical and nursing colleagues.

In addition, social workers approved under mental health legislation are required to be involved in certain compulsory admissions to hospital of people suffering from mental illness. In each of those cases social workers are employed by, and their records are the property of, the local authority. Accordingly, the Government's assurances on health information would be subverted in respect of names and addresses where vulnerable people are helped by social workers who happen to be members of a multi-disciplinary team. That cannot be good for the patients, let alone for the social workers' professional effort.

In my second example, names and addresses are the highly sensitive information. We all know that social workers are often the intermediaries between hostile individuals, occasionally within a family. They have to protect the whereabouts of some family members—for example, of a mother whose children are at risk from a violent father. Such mothers would not be reassured to know that after leaving the matrimonial home their names and addresses were on a public register. Moreover, there is the theoretical possibility of the mother having to demonstrate to the registrar the need to exclude that information from the register. Some Scottish social workers have not yet received replies from the Scottish Office to questions about parents against registration and given that the Scots are a year ahead of the English that does not encourage us to believe that this has been thought through properly. We in England and Wales must learn from the experience of our Scottish colleagues.

Thirdly, in some circumstances the expectation of names and addresses being available to the registrar could be detrimental to wider interests of society. In other words, it is incumbent on local authority social services departments to make it clear to anybody who either offers them information or makes a complaint about something in the community, that in so doing their name and address can be made available to the poll tax registration officer. It is inadequate to claim that a member of the public would not know for certain that his name and address was made available from social service records. Many would deduce that, but they need to be told.

For example, it could be important for a neglected child regularly to attend a day nursery where help can be given in parenting skills and supervision of the child maintained. That course of action, which I know from constituency experience many parents are reluctant to take, would

juxtapose with a demand for the poll tax. The obvious conclusion would be drawn and the child might be made more vulnerable by being withdrawn from the service. It is no good saying, "Ah well, the parents shouldn't do that because they cannot escape poll tax that way. There is no hiding place." The mere fact that their social service records with their name and address can be handed over could make the child more vulnerable by being withdrawn from essential help. That is the case, and the Minister must not assume otherwise.

It is similarly unrealistic to postulate that social workers should not condone poll tax avoidance. As I said, this is not a charter for evasion or avoidance, but the fact is that social workers have a legal obligation to their clients, certainly to give confidentiality, to give primacy to the interests of vulnerable people and to make it clear to such people that they can be assisted only if there is a full transfer of confidential and private information.

A problem can arise, because some people will be dependent upon adults who are liable for payment. It may be argued that there is a borderline in the case of mental handicap. I do not say that this was not debated, because it was. The Government moved a little way in the right direction, but nowhere near enough. The initial uncertainties about the liability to pay will be compounded by the exemptions of handicapped people, as some social workers have already discovered in Scotland. Where there is doubt in a family, because of the dependence of one adult upon another—there may be a borderline case because of mental handicap—that is a problem for the social services. It will not be a problem for the surveyor or the canvasser who knocks on the door and discovers who lives at a dwelling, but it is a further pressure on social service records.

My final example is a serious one. It concerns the fundamental instance where names and addresses form the sensitive information, which, of course, applies to adoption cases. Parliament has legislated to protect the confidentiality of adoption information, most recently in the Data Protection Act 1984. I believe that, legally and technically, social services departments are adoption agencies. Adoption regulations have been based upon a concept of absolute confidentiality, to protect the identity of the adopted child in his or her adoptive family.

As I have said, local authority social services departments are adoption agencies, but they will no longer be able to offer the unconditional guarantee of confidentiality of information conveyed to them unless the Bill is amended directly—which it will not be—or unless the regulations are amended and, as they are still in draft form, they could be. It is not too late, because the consultation period for the regulations is continuing. The adoption point must be one that concerns the Minister and her colleagues. If it does not, there is something sick at the heart of the Government. There can be no argument—even as a spin-off of pursuing the legislation for the poll tax—for upsetting the sensitive adoption arrangements of this country.

Given the range of legitimate information available for the poll tax registration officers—such as the electoral register, the marriage register, the rating and the rent records, the library cards and the entire gamut of local authority information—and the fact that the Government have excluded local authority employment records, police records and names and addresses held by the Inland Revenue, it would be better if social services information were placed off limits unequivocally.

We may argue about local income tax, but we were told during the passing of the Bill that the Inland Revenue has in its records some 31 million names and addresses. We are talking only about names and addresses for the poll tax officer. That has nothing to do with income or privacy. Given that the Government have excluded those and given that many other legitimate sources of information are available, it would be a lot better if all social service records—names and addresses are part of the case work records—were unequivocally placed off limits.

The Government's approach is inconsistent. If evasion were the prime concern, the Government would naturally include all local authority employment records. It follows, however, that a quarter of the salaries of those local authority employees will be paid for by the poll tax. Therefore one would not expect evasion to be practised by those people. Such records are not accessible to the poll tax registration officer. The confidentiality of the records of the clients of social workers and the good neighbours of the community should not be breached.

If the Government persist in stressing that only sensitive information should be excluded, surely professional advice must have been given to the effect that names and addresses alone can, in many circumstances, form the sensitive information held by a local authority.

There is no case for allowing access even to the names and addresses on social work case files. The Minister may say that there is no such access, but we should remember that the names and addresses, the ages of the clients and the length of residence at a particular address are held on such case files. To breach the confidentiality of such files interferes with medical practice, and uses information that may have been kept secret from hostile family members. It uses information given by the public in potential child abuse cases. Those files provide information about people who may not be eligible to pay the poll tax anyway, such as those with a mental handicap.

Social work files also contain information about adoption case work. That that information may be the names and addresses only, but in the circumstance that I have outlined, those names and addresses may be so sensitive that they should not be used.

Given all the other information to which the poll tax registration officer has access, it is proper that social work information and records should be withheld just as police records and Inland Revenue information are to be withheld.

6.57 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): My hon. Friend the member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) must be congratulated, not for the first time, on his diligent and detailed work on the poll tax. I must also congratulate my hon. Friend on succeeding in getting the words "poll tax" on the Order Paper. I thought that it appeared on it all the time and I did not know that it was called anything else. What appeared on the Order Paper is largely due to the efforts of my hon. Friend. I had expected to see the phrase "Tory poll tax" on Order Paper. That is the next word to be included so that the phrase can be hung around the Government's neck.

[Mr. Clive Soley]

Although debates at this time in the morning are sometimes seen as rather esoteric, to put it mildly, there is an opportunity for the Minister to do something useful. She could accept what my hon. Friend has said. There is a strong reason for doing so, not least the commitments given in the House of Lords. Those commitments are important.

If the Minister would care to say that she is disposed to amend the draft regulations as requested, it would cause me to shorten my comments and may cause her to shorten her contribution. This is an opportunity for the Minister to obtain a quiet headline for herself as one of the few Ministers during the night to make some progressive moves to change legislation. My hon. Friend is right to say that there is a weird distinction in keeping social service records as the exception to the list that he read out. The Minister was a psychiatric social worker and she will know the importance of the confidentiality of records.

As the Minister will know, it is one of the jobs of a social worker of any type to tell a person who asks him about confidentiality what the limits of that confidentiality are. A client may come along to an office one day and say that he wants to talk to a social worker about something personal and important, but that he is worried about doing so until he knows the rules of confidentiality. The social worker will usually say that he will respect confidentiality unless it involves some threatened harm to other people. In such cases, social workers knew that they had a duty to override confidentiality if necessary.

As my hon. Friend has pointed out, this will no longer be the only exception. The extension will mean that social workers will have to tell people that they are obliged by law to give information to the poll tax registration officer in certain circumstances. They would have no other option, if ordered to hand over the information. That is an abuse of confidentiality.

My hon. Friend's quotation of Lord Caithness in the House of Lords shows that the other place was anxious about this, to put it mildly. If it is recognised that names and addresses are sensitive information, it must be admitted that the length of stay at an address is sensitive, given the special nature of some social work clients.

My hon. Friend gave a number of important examples of this, to which I would add one or two others. He made the important link between the Health Service and the social services. Such links are many and varied. The Minister, with her special knowledge, will know that local authorities place social workers in regional secure units and secure hospitals. She will also know that many patients are released into the community, especially from regional secure units. So, giving out information about an address and the length of stay at it can have important consequences for a person returning to the community —and for the community itself.

Child abuse cases are also vulnerable in this respect. If we tell others about the "good neighbour", as my hon. Friend described him or her, or about a parent who talks about an abused child, that will help neither the social work agency nor the enforcement of the law. That is precisely what might turn away a parent from a social work agency he had approached.

My hon. Friend has made out a strong case. Changes that have resulted from various Acts, such as the Data Protection Act 1984, are important, but there is no good reason for including social service records in information that can be used, and I strongly endorse my hon. Friend's plea that they be put off limits. I hope that the Minister will now rise and say that she will seek to do something about this.

7.3 am

The Parliamentary Under-Sectretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I begin by paying tribute to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), whose contributon to these debates on local government and the community charge has been considerable. He referred to the hundreds of hours spent in Committee. I was not there, but I heard much about it. The debate has shown that, although the hon. Gentleman has chosen to retire from the front line, he still intends to harry us from the Back Benches. I look forward to many more exchanges with him in future.

A number of points were made; it is important to take this opportunity to set the record straight and to explain some of the details of community charge registration. As the hon. Gentleman said, the matter was not debated in Committee in the House, but it was given careful scrutiny in the House of Lords and was the subject of several commitments.

Under the new system, for the first time local services will be paid for by all the adults who benefit from them, with some important exceptions and exemptions. We must regard the community charge register in the context of the establishment of a community charge system generally, ensuring that as many people as possible are on the register. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's comments that it is a legal tax and must be collected. I accept that he is not seeking a charter for evasion. But this involves the compilation of community charges registers, so that people subject to the charge can be properly billed for it. This universal registration is at the very heart of the new system, and we must provide registration officers with a means of effectively doing this. One of the major disadvantages of the present rating system has been that, of 36 million people, a mere 18 million were paying rates. We must try to reach as many people as we properly can. The success of the new system in part lies in ensuring greater accountability.

The community charge register is, to all intents and purposes, a list of names and addresses—as is the telehone directory or the electoral roll. No system of local finance could manage without a list of those liable to contribute to it. The current system needs a list of ratepayers. By contrast, to keep the matter in proportion, under the system apparently favoured by the Labour party there would have to be a list of owners of property and a list of people subject to local income tax. The information needed for that list would need to contain much more in the way of personal details than anything that we propose for the community charge.

I shall deal in a moment with the hon. Gentleman's specific points about social services. As he rightly says, I spent 10 years working as a social worker, so I am aware of the issues.

Mr. Rooker: That is what this debate is all about.

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, but it is important to put it in context. I take the opportunity to clarify and expand how

the register will work, because it is important not to stir up paranoia about the amount of information that will be passed on. Social workers should be able to inform their clients of the true state of events, and not inflame and exacerbate needless anxiety or uncertainty.

Mr. Soley: The Minister says that she wants to put the matter in context. She has just talked about alternatives, two of which are already well dealt with. Rate collection is a well-established procedure that is well known to everyone. There is no reason why the local income tax should not be collected by the Inland Revenue.

Mrs. Bottomley: There is agreement that the present system of rates is not an adequate way to continue to finance local government, but this would be a way of making available far more information.

The registration officers will be under a duty to supply every person whose name appears on the register with a copy of his entry. Any person who feels that he should not be on the register, or wishes to challenge his entry, will be able to appeal to a valuation and community charge tribunal. Those tribunals will be similar to the current local valuation courts, which have an admirable record of informality in their procedures. We are providing for appeals to be made by written representations for those who prefer that approach.

As well as the register, there will be an extract for public inspection, because it is important that people should have confidence in the new system. They should be able to see for themselves that the registration has been properly carried out. But we are providing safeguards. The public extract will show only the addresses, surnames and initials. Anyone who fears that inclusion in it would lead to the threat of physical violence will be able to ask to be omitted from it.

The registration officer will have no power to sell or supply the extract to anyone. It will be available only for inspection. There is a specific prohibition against supplying a copy of the register. Anyone who feels under a threat of violence can ask for his name to be omitted from the register, and I fully recognise that some social service claimants may wish to avail themselves of that opportunity. Therefore, it is important to spell out the right that is available.

Finally, before turning in detail to some of the other points raised, I should like to say that there is no reason why anyone should seek to avoid registration on the grounds of hardship. The community charge system will reflect people's ability to pay. As the hon. Member for Perry Barr knows, rebates of up to 80 per cent. will be available and people receiving income support will have included in their benefit an amount to reflect the fact that they have to pay the charge. The figures announced in October by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security mean that people on income support are fully protected for community charges well above the national average on current spending.

The information that will be available to community charges registration officers is the crucial issue. There have been a number of misleading stories in the press recently and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be content if I take the opportunity to put the record straight on that matter. I understand that a local authority association recently made available to the press a list of 50 questions that it argued registration officers would be able to ask about people's circumstances. It said that failure to answer some of them could lead to imprisonment.

That report has no official status whatsoever. It does not form part of any official guidance from the Department to local authorities. I shall deal in a moment with the questions that registration officers need to ask, but I should like to make one point absolutely clear at the outset. There is no provision in the Local Government Finance Act 1988, or in any regulations that we shall make under it, that will allow anyone to be imprisoned for refusing to give information. That is an area where social services clients may well feel particularly vulnerable.

The Act provides for financial penalties to be imposed by registration officers if people do not reasonably provide information which is within their possession and which the officer needs for the purposes of doing his job. It also provides that, when a court has granted an authority a liability order against someone who has failed to pay his community charge, that person may be fined if he refuses to provide information to the authority or deliberately gives false information. There is no provision, however, for imprisonment in either case.

The information-gathering powers of the registration officer's job are very simply described. He has to compile the community charges register in each charging authority. To do that, he needs surprisingly little information. Recent descriptions of the registration process as a snooper's charter, or the spurious reports to which I referred earlier of the list of 50 questions are, as those who perpetrated them I hope know, simply fiction. In the vast majority of cases, all the registration officer needs to know about someone is his name and address and the date on which he became resident in the area. In special cases only, the registration officer may need to know more than that.

However, he has to register all adults. If he is compiling a register that will cover a financial year, he will need to know the date of birth of people who will be 18 in that year. If a person is a student, the registration officer will need to know that fact so that he or she is given the special 80 per cent. student relief from that charge. If the person is exempt from the charge, the registration officer will need to know the details. I hope that the hon. Member for Hammersmith will accept that, for someone to benefit from the exemption to which he or she is entitled, it is necessary for the registration officer to be able to ask for information.

That will on occasion mean asking people who have had the misfortune to be severely mentally handicapped about their condition, but it is wrong to frighten and alarm people by exaggerating the numbers of questions involved. It is certainly not, as I shall explain in more detail, part of the information to be available from the social services. In some cases, there may be one or two additional questions to answer, but, for the vast majority of people, the only requirement is to supply their names and addresses.

Registration officers will have access to a variety of sources of information, but, irrespective of the number of sources available to them, they have no right to any information that is not required for the purposes of fulfilling their statutory duties. I make no apology for repeating again that this means only finding out people's names and addresses—not even their ages, as was suggested by the hon. Gentleman. It is essential to emphasise that fundamental point.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

The basic source of information about anyone who is subject to the community charge is the person himself. Where a person is requested to supply information by a registration officer, there will be no need to seek that information from any other source. In order to prepare, however, for the initial community charge canvass next spring, registration officers may wish to draw on information from sources already available to them in order to provide a starting point for the canvass. That information will include names and addresses of people who are already known to the local authority.

People's names and addresses may be held by a local authority for a variety of purposes. The housing department will have a list of council tenants. The treasurer's department will have a list of the names and addresses of ratepayers. That is the kind of basic raw material which will enable the registration officer to produce a starting point for the canvass.

Mr. Rooker: Why is the local authority personnel department exempt? Who asked for the amendment that no employment records should be used? That was not requested during the passage of the Bill. Why did the Government put it in?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Government are at pains to ensure that all information is reasonably available from local sources of information. It was decided that information should not come from the Inland Revenue. I cannot at this moment tell the hon. Gentleman where the commitment first arose.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Lady misunderstands me. I am talking about the local authority as an employer. Local authorities are among the biggest employers in the country. In fact, in Birmingham the biggest employer is the local authority. That means that the poll tax registration officer will not have access to all the information available to the local authority because he does not have access to the names and addresses of the people employed by the authority. Why is that a no-go area for the poll tax registration officer? Who asked for that amendment? it was not asked for during the passage of the Bill.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman appears to be pursuing an argument that I do not wish to follow. An employee of the local authority might believe that employment information was sensitive. I will let the hon. Gentleman know how that amendment arose, but he should appreciate it for what it is instead of challenging it.

The registration officer will know the addresses of the properties that he is going to canvass, and he will know in a good many cases the names of the people he expects to find resident there. He will then be able to send to those addresses requests for the information that he needs to compile the register.

Although the registration officer will be an officer of the charging authority, he is, legally, quite separate from it, and his position as an officer of the authority does not in itself give him the right simply to examine all the documents in the council offices. His right to obtain information from his own local authority, or from any other public body, is closely circumscribed. He has no right to any information which he does not need for the purposes of carrying out his statutory functions or to any information which an authority obtained by virtue of it being a member of a police authority; he has no right to any information which an authority obtained by virtue of its being an employer; and, finally, he has no right to any information except names and addresses, and dates of residence.

The hon. Member asked whether this meets the Government's commitment, referred to in the Lords, to deny registration officers access to sensitive records kept in local authority social services departments. I argue strongly that it does. If a local authority receives a request from its own, or any other, registration officer for information about names and addresses, it may collect that information from a number of sources, including the social services department. However, all the authority is required to pass on is a list of names, addresses and dates. There is no reason why the registration officer should be able to tell from such a list why the person's name and address happen to be known to the authority. He may be a council tenant. He may be a ratepayer. He may have a library ticket. It will certainly not be possible to deduce that he is the subject of a social services department case file.

Although the registration officer can require information from the social services department, he does not then reveal from where he received his information. It is not identified as coming from the social services department.

Mr. Soley: Two matters are troubling my hon. Friend and me. First, if a person attends an AIDS clinic—which will encompass a limited number of people—and sees a social worker there, it is not known whether his or her name, together with those of the other patients, will be mixed up with the names of all the others dealing with the social services. One cannot be sure that that will not happen, particularly if there is a joint health and social services department.

Secondly, what is the social worker to say to the individual, who may be suffering from AIDS or be the victim of child abuse, about confidentiality—given that the official is obliged to tell them, "I am bound in certain circumstances to pass your name and address to the poll tax registration officer"?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman makes again, strongly, a point he has already made. I hear what he says, and I hope that he hears my response.

The registration officer requires names and addresses, but it will not be possible to identify the source of that information. The social worker may make it clear that an individual's name and address will be passed on, but also that sensitive information will not. The commitment that such information will not be made available was specifically given to the House of Lords.

I make it clear that inferences, moral or otherwise, should not be drawn about an individual registered with a social services department. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not seek to imply that, somehow, a stigma is automatically attached to one's name being held on a social services record. The hon. Gentleman referred to examples where there may be sensitivity, but that reveals a blinkered attitude to the work of social services departments. An individual may be known because he or she is an adopting parent, because they have been to an AIDS clinic, because they are a foster parent, or because they use the meals on wheels service. There are any number

of reasons why a person's name may be known. It is ridiculous to jump to the conclusion that it leads to any stigma, and to do so merely exacerbates precisely the problem that the hon. Gentleman and I hope to challenge.

The question of information from social services records was debated at length during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1987, both in this House and in another place. This House decided that the safeguards the Act provided were sufficient to ensure that no community charge registration officer could demand sensitive information from social services departments. The regulations we propose making under the Act carry out the Government's commitment in that respect.

I do not accept that names and addresses are sensitive information. It is in everybody's interest to ensure that community charges registers are as complete and as accurate as possible. We have provided registration officers with the powers that they need to carry out their essential functions, while ensuring that individuals' rights are fully protected.

Mr. Rooker: We shall return to that point when we see the regulations in due course. Meanwhile, will the Minister explain why there is no mention on page 11 of the Government leaflet published last week of sensitive social services records? Why were they not highlighted, to fulfil the specific promise made to the House of Lords?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall deal with the document to which the hon. Gentleman refers shortly, but first I shall reply to his points about the Data Protection Act 1984.

The Department keeps closely in touch with the data protection registrar, who is content with our proposals. The information provided to community charges registration officers falls within data protection principles. Therefore, they will register with the registrar as data users, and we are giving them advice on the terms of their applications. The sources of information available to community charge registration officers will be fully disclosed to the registrar.

The hon. Gentleman made reference to the excellent document, "You and the Community Charge". I am delighted that he is already busy studying it, and I hope that he will act as an example to others. It is one of many examples of information, literature or guidance notes that we are producing to ensure that people are in no uncertainty. It is extremely important for them to study it too.

The hon. Gentleman referred to page 2 as though it were an enormous triumph constantly to point the contrast between the terms "community charge" and "poll tax". He is full of glee about having secured a debate using the words "poll tax". I should have thought that after 200 hours of debate in Committee even the hon. Gentleman would realise that no one is able to vote simply because his or her name appears on the community charges registration list. I find it extraordinary that someone so talented in other respects should seem so blinkered in this one.

As the hon. Gentleman says, the sort of anxiety felt by most people is largely about such matters as information on criminal records. As an ex-social worker, I bitterly resent the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that being known to a social services department is somehow analogous to having a police record. That is deplorable and intolerable, and I am at great pains to make it clear that there is no stigma attached to one's name and address being known to a local authority. We put considerable care into the publication, and we wanted to allay anxiety on certain fronts. Certainly the subject of the police is generally thought to cause concern, but the idea that the overwhelming majority of the public—unless the hon. Gentleman gets his way—will be deeply distressed seems to me to be scaremongering and to cause particular difficulties.

Mr. Rooker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not interrupt the Minister when she alleged that I had said something that I did not say. I have never made the connection between police records and social service files. I only asked why there was no reference to the sensitivity of social work case records being excluded, as was given to the House of Lords.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a long intervention in the guise of a point of order.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman referred to page 11 of the booklet, which refers to sensitive information that is not available, such as comprehensive records held by police authorities. He is making the analogy, and I stand by that. Anyone who is concerned about the subject need only turn back a page to see that, according to page 10,

> "The register will contain only the information needed to enable local authorities to ask the right people for the right community charges at the right time."

What is required from local authority records are the names and addresses of the people concerned.

I would much prefer it if the hon. Gentleman, having raised an important subject, now accepted our assurances that sensitive information will not be made available; even ages will not be made available. It will not be possible to identify where the information came from. Having a full and effective register is a key aspect in providing for the community charge. It is the secret to more effective and accountable local government, and a much fairer system of financing it. The Department has taken great steps to explain the principle, and as the hon. Gentleman said, the consultation on the regulations continues until a bit later this month.

It is an indication of the seriousness and commitment with which we all take on the task of compiling these registers to ensure that they are done effectively and competently that there is a proper appeals mechanism and that the public understand that, if there is any likelihood that a person may be vulnerable to threats of violence, that person can ask for his name to be removed.

I hope that the debate will have reassured people and clarified the matter properly.

Church Buildings

7.29 am

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): The privilege of representing the city of Salisbury falls to me. Salisbury was re-established as a cathedral city in the year 1220. By 1275, it had sent its first representative to Westminster. I am deeply privileged to represent that fine cathedral city, in which I was brought up as a child. I attended school in the cathedral close.

Salisbury cathedral's spire has been repaired twice during my lifetime—round about 1950, and now. I have also witnessed dramatic changes in tourism and security. I well remember that, on my 10th birthday, the librarian of Salisbury cathedral took me to the cathedral library and said that she intended to give me a birthday treat. She put into my hands the original Magna Carta. It had a profound effect thereafter on my political thinking. In today's atmosphere of security, it is inconceivable that that could happen now.

I have also watched the buildings in the cathedral close develop from genteel tattiness into a millionaires' row. I live outside Salisbury, in the parish of South Newton, with its typical solid and undistinguished Victorian Gothic church that is much loved by the community. One of my forebears was a London entrepreneur who helped to establish what I can only describe as a chain of Congregational churches across London. I am particularly pleased, therefore, that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is here. I look forward to hearing what he, with his non conformist faith, has to say.

The Church of England has been a good steward of its heritage. Ecclesiastical exemption, which raises so much heat in debate—from listed buildings consent to certain planning controls—has been justified. The revised Care of Cathedrals Measure that was debated recently by the General Synod of the Church of England is very welcome. It maintains the traditional independence that is so jealously guarded by deans and chapters of cathedrals, who believe that cathedrals are liturgically alive and spiritual centres, not just heritage monuments. Under the new measure, cathedral chapters will be unable to make any changes to structures or furnishings without the approval of the local fabric committees and a national fabric commission.

The Government already help the parish churches. On 29 November 1988, I asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whether she agreed that cathedrals should be eligible for similar restoration grants. I regret that I have yet to convince her. The Select Committee on the Environment's report on historic buildings and ancient monuments, dated 21 January 1987, also failed to convince the Government. It recommended that the major importance of cathedral buildings, and the need to ensure their conservation, justified their eligibility for grant from public funds from now on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) will no doubt argue that cathedrals want to be independent, that they can look after themselves and that the Christian community must do more to help them. On the last point, the 16th report of the Central Stipends Authority of the Church of England tells us that, between 1978 and 1988, current giving by individuals has doubled, that income from glebe land—well managed at last—is up by 50 per cent. and that grants from the Church Commissioners are down by a third.

What is the independence that the cathedrals crave, and can they continue to look after themselves while the world and his wife troop through our churches and cathedrals on the tourist treadmill—that is what it is rapidly becoming —as we fail to adjust to the needs and the very profitable aspirations of their visitors? The Church of England has 16,700 churches, 12,000 of which are statutorily listed and 2,675 grade 1 buildings. There are more listed churches attracting more visitors than all National Trust properties and ancient monuments put together.

Churches and cathedrals are primarily places of Christian worship at the heart of European civilisation —hence the need for independence, expressed as ecclesiastic exemption—but they are also the nation's top tourist attraction, money spinners for their local communities and major tax gatherers for the Treasury. Only last week my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), the Minister with responsibilities for tourism, when interviewed by TVS outside Winchester cathedral, generously acknowledged that there was a problem with cathedral finance that the Government must look at.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Sometimes I am encouraged by the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but at other times I am a little worried. I am not sure whether the Church would wish to be known as a top tourist attraction in terms of bringing in money. That is not a concept which the Church usually puts around. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problem is that many other countries fund their churches extremely well, often through local authorities, while our Government are still caught in the stupid trap of private affluence for some and public squalor for all?

Mr. Key: I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's last point about funding. I must point out that the last thing that we want is for the Church of England to follow the French example, which has sterilised churches completely, whether they are financed by local authorities or by the state.

As for the hon. Gentleman's point about churches being top tourist attractions, one important point about the Mappa Mundi controversy in Hereford is that churches should be maximising their tourist profits. They have been told to market themselves better, and they have to acknowledge that they are a top tourist attraction. If they were not a top tourist attraction, life would be much easier for them, as they would not have to provide so many facilities.

Why should the Government help cathedrals? Have they not appealed successfully in the past? But cathedrals have not appealed successfully in the past. They have appealed every 20 years or so and they are successful only when they are appealing to repair or replace a particular structure such as a spire, a vault or roof timbers. Consequently, the less glamorous parts of the buildings are lucky to get even routine maintenance. Suddenly, those parts are in danger of collapsing and become the subject of yet another appeal. I estimate that our cathedrals are appealing for about £50 million at present. In Salisbury, we are appealing for £6·5 million and we have raised half that sum.

Companies, individuals and trusts have thousands of competing claims. The pork barrel is not bottomless and our cathedrals cannot plan sensible programmes of fabric restoration on the scale necessary. They have not been able to do so for years. The advantages would be enormous in terms of sensible budgeting by the cathedrals and in terms of the craftsmen required to apply skills which have existed in Britain for 1,000 years, but which often have to be revived for a particular cathedral. However after the work is completed, the craftsmen are often laid off and their skills may not be used again for a long time.

The historic background to the financing of Church buildings is important. Each cathedral is a unique case with different pressures on the deans and chapters, who are not as happy as they might be about the cathedrals' future.

Henry VIII looked for cash from the monastic foundations, and that left its mark on the cathedrals. If cathedrals were part of a monastic foundation, suddenly all their endowments were removed. Winchester suffered, but Salisbury, which was not a monastic foundation, was comparatively well off.

Later on, the Fund for the Augmentation of Livings and Impoverished Clergy, more commonly called Queen Anne's bounty, was established in 1704 from the first fruits and tenths of ecclesiastical benefits. That was augmented by parliamentary grants, and maintained a completely separate existence until 1948 when it was taken over by the Church Commissioners.

The most dramatic effect on cathedrals' finances was the nationalisation of the 19th century, when the then Ecclesiastical Commission told all cathedrals, deans and chapters that they must surrender all lands and properties lying outside the immediate bounds of the cathedral in order to found the Church Commissioners. The intention was to aid the efficiency and correct the imbalance of wealth within the Church of England. The dean and chapter of Durham refused to fall into line and, consequently, Durham is well off today and its figures look good. I wonder why other cathedrals were so eager to capitulate to state blackmail in the 19th century.

The cathedrals have been disadvantaged recently in a little known deal involving the community charge and churches. I recently tabled a parliamentary question to ask what steps the Church Commissioners would be taking to assist the churches in adjusting to the introduction of the community charge. The reply was that the Commissioners were closely consulting dioceses about what changes would be desirable in the stipends arangements of the clergy when they and their spouses become liable to pay a personal community charge in 1990. Because most of the clergy have hitherto lived in their accommodation free of rates, the Commissioners hope to make substantial additional sums available for stipends in 1990 to reflect the extra costs that will fall on them.

A bargain has been struck whereby the Government will give an extra grant to churches for the maintenance of fabric, which will be comparable to the amount of community charge raised from the clergy. There will be state aid for churches in use in excess of £3 million, administered by English Heritage on behalf of the Government. The problem is that the "churches in use" programme is for churches that are architecturally distinguished. Therefore, I fear that money allocated will be distorted towards the south-east, where there are more churches of architectural value. That will disadvantage parish churches in virtually all our industrial centres, as well as the nonconformist churches.

It is wrong to think that the only churches that have a problem with funding for fabric restoration are churches in the Church of England. Many larger 19th century churches and chapels belonging to other branches of the Christian faith are in serious deficit as a result of declining membership, as in the Church of England, and an almost total lack of endowment. They need to be considered.

The Government will increase the proportion of money allocated to the redundant churches fund from 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. of its total. Administrative offices, for example diocesan offices and the Church Commissioners' offices, will be exempt from non-domestic rates, and church halls will not be subject to rates, even if they make additional money from concerts and so on. Therefore, with the exception of the changes in provision for salaried officers of each cathedral, because the Church Commissioners already pay certain stipends, those moneys will not apply to cathedrals. They will again lose, and only selected parish churches will gain under the deal.

During the recent Hereford Mappa Mundi controversy, I was incensed, although not surprised, to hear slick advertising and marketing men saying that money would flood in if the cathedrals "marketed themselves properly". They should talk to the tourist industry about the futility of taking people to cathedrals with inadequate facilities, poor access and little parking.

We know that to our cost in Salisbury, where the close is what I would describe as a slum of a parking lot. Our medieval gates are damaged by commercial traffic to the point of danger and possible closure. Why do we not do something about that? The dean and chapter are doing their best, but we do not do much about it because it is difficult to persuade the guardians of the heritage that cathedrals are not ruins but living organisms. Recently, well-thought-out plans to construct a visitors' centre at Salisbury were described by the Royal Fine Art Commission as "unscholarly and destructive".

The pressure for vehicular access, parking and environmental protection can be met at Salisbury only by the construction of a new gateway in the southern side of the close—a section of wall rebuilt by the Victorians. No other option has been suggested, yet the plan is being strongly opposed by English Heritage.

We need a more constructive partnership between the guardians of the heritage and the deans and chapters, who are doing their best to maximise revenue but are frustrated at almost every turn. Even when cathedrals try to maximise their revenue, they are threatened by state quangos. What a contrast with our secular heritage, which can afford a gung-ho approach to life—and good luck to it.

In a glossy publication recently sent to all hon. Members called "The Arts in Britain", published by the Office of Arts and Libraries, the chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the noble Lord Charteris of Amisfield, was asked about the establishment of his quango. He said:

> "It was a general feeling that too many works of art were leaving the country and house after house was falling into disrepair and going down the drain. And Parliament said this must not happen again.
>
> So they set up this fund under independent trustees, so that it is totally divorced from politics. It will take off the

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shoulders of ministers or departments the difficult political question of deciding whether or not you do save houses like Mentmore . . .

We started off with £12·4 m and we were told it was to be used to give financial assistance for the acquisition and maintenance of land, buildings or objects of historical or other interest to the heritage. Period!

We could invest this money more or less as we wished. We didn't just have to keep it in Treasury bonds. We could put a certain proportion of it abroad, in Japan or Australia or wherever we thought right . . .

The government have, in fact, treated us extremely well. You never know what you're going to get until you get it but last year they gave us £20 m, just like that, and a couple of years before they gave us £25 m to look after the three great houses, Kedleston, Nostell Priory and Weston Park. And the year before they gave us £10 m. They have supported us very well indeed.

I would argue that the country house, with its contents, with its park with, if you like, the world of letters and politics of the people who've lived in it, is Britain's supreme contribution to civilisation. Therefore it's absolutely part of our heritage and we're justified in spending a hell of a lot of money on it. The money goes not only on buying the country house, and buying its contents, but above all on endowing it. In other words, creating a situation where its future is secured for all time. That's a very expensive business."

He further said:

"Heritage is in the eye of the beholder like beauty, in a sense. Our great Cathedrals must be part of our heritage, but for some people a whelk stall could be, because it is part of our life."

Whelk stalls are eligible for state help, but cathedrals are not. More people visit cathedrals and churches than all the National Trust properties and monuments put together. More people go to church on Sundays than go to football matches on Saturdays. Why is there discrimination against churches?

Nobody wants a French solution to our problems, whereby the state takes over cathedrals and turns them into museums. Unlike France, we are not a secular state, so how can the Government justify their policy for cathedrals?

In effect, a Conservative Government are nationalising the secular heritage, while cathedrals—which, because we have a state religion, are in effect nationalised—are starved of capital investment and certainly receive no grants under the industry Acts. Perhaps I should take up the matter with my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle. Given the vast tourist grants that are available, perhaps we should ensure that there is something worth while for the tourists to see.

The time has come to consider two schemes, which may be alternatives. The first is to extend to cathedrals the existing pound-for-pound funding that is available for listed parish churches. The second, which is more radical, is to establish a new endowment fund along the lines of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Neither Henry VIII nor Queen Anne, neither the 19th-century reformers nor the reorganisation of 1948, got it right. The present reforming and radical Government are the most likely for a long time to succeed where others have failed. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will carry that message to her colleagues and set about the task with her customary vigour and enthusiasm.

7.49 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) raised this subject and introduced it so well. I share much of his concern about cathedral heritage and believe that the time has passed when it is reasonable to exclude cathedrals from the pattern of state aid that has been built up for historic buildings. As the hon. Gentleman explained, cathedrals vary in the degree of endowment that they enjoy and the problems that they face.

A move towards state help for some cathedrals must be managed with some care—first, so that it is clearly related to need and, secondly, so that it does not entirely pre-empt resources on which there are other important claims, not least parish churches, and, as I shall argue, buildings of denominations other than the Church of England. If I focus on those, it is because I think that no other hon. Member will do so.

The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) is present. I am sure that, in the course of this short debate, we shall have other opportunities to examine the position of cathedrals which, as in the case of Hereford cathedral, has been further complicated by the presence in that cathedral, as in so many, of an item of major national interest, the Mappa Mundi. There is distinct concern that such a thing should be able to remain in a place where it has been for so long and where it is part of the local and national heritage. That is a separate claim on the public purse and public support. An object of such importance should not leave this country. In the case of Hereford, it can and should be kept in the place in which it has been for so long.

I direct the Minister's attention to a different part of the heritage of buildings, and that is Nonconformist chapels and meeting houses which have languished under a cloud for many years. I sometimes think that Nonconformists have an inferiority complex about their own buildings. That is beginning to be dispelled as more and more writers, architectural historians and campaigners begin to focus attention on this heritage of buildings. It is getting wider and wider publicity. Marcus Binney, writing in *The Independent* colour supplement a couple of weeks ago, said:

"No aspect of English architecture has been so consistently undervalued as the Nonconformist chapel . . . In most books, ecclesiastical architecture since the Reformation is discussed solely in terms of the Church of England . . . Yet chapels and meeting-houses form an alternative history of church architecture over the past 300 years, unparalleled in the rest of Europe."

There is significance in that 300 years. Next year is the 300th anniversary of the Toleration Act, from which dates the building of most legally built chapels. There are obviously a few from the occasional periods before that, when our turbulent history gave a brief opportunity for Nonconformists to build. It is from 1689 onwards, however, that building really began. For example, the late 17th century Unitarian chapel at Macclesfield records itself as the chapel of William and Mary's loyal dissenting subjects. In the immediate aftermath of celebrating the Glorious Revolution, we should spare a little time next year to celebrate the 300 years since the Toleration Act. What better way to do that than to give some greater recognition to the quality and importance of some of those buildings.

Importance resides in exteriors and interiors. Many chapels are important features of the townscape and landscape, but many also have largely undisturbed interiors that show a different tradition and history of worship, and do so in a way that, in some cases, is much less dramatically affected by the Victorian restoration than was the case with much of the heritage of the Church of England.

Nonconformity is affected by financial problems that have already been described in relation to the Church of England, but writ large. Quite a number of the most historically important chapels are those of the smallest denominations—the Unitarians, the Society of Friends, even smaller denominations such as the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion and even, in one case, a virtually defunct denomination—defunct for religious reasons—the Catholic Apostolic Church, a millennial sect which has run out of ordained apostles, but which had a remarkable collection of buildings. Larger denominations had an enormous proliferation of buildings arising from what one might call the free market in Nonconformity, which ran through the 19th century, when competition was the order of the day. Different groups of Presbyterians and Methodists built on a massive scale. Their latter-day successors simply cannot use that number of buildings.

Some Nonconformist buildings are in the wrong place for the congregations they serve. Others are thought nowadays not to meet the needs of a modern worshipping congregation. Not all problems are problems of decline. Some of the buildings that are most threatened are those to which a lively and active congregation wants for its own reasons to make changes. They may not always appreciate the value of their own building, or the possibility that they could be helped to retain it instead of seeking the developers' cheque book as a means of meeting their growing needs or difficulties. That is a temptation to which many Nonconformist congregations have been subjected over the years. Developers have said, "I will build you a new chapel if we can have a shopping centre on this site." As a result, we have lost important 18th and 19th century buildings.

The problems are writ large because Nonconformists are not cushioned by the Church Commissioners; they do not have the same degree of help with the stipends of their clergy as the Church of England and congregations have to find their share of the costs of paying the clergy without the degree of help from endowment. That creates more serious problems in maintaining buildings. Add to that the lack of recognition—which extends to local authorities and sometimes even to the Department's inspectorates and to Ministers themselves—and one begins to realise how serious the problems are.

A few months ago we had a Minister's decision on a demolition proposal for a chapel in Blyth, Northumberland in which one of the arguments adduced in favour of giving consent to demolition was that there was no local opposition. The whole purpose of ministerial consent being required for the demolition of historic buildings is that the local community does not always realise the importance of a particular building. That degree of lack of recognition is very worrying.

Let us consider the financial implications of Government help for the Churches. Matters have improved a little, thanks to English Heritage, which has certainly recognised some of the issues to which I have referred. It has directed attention towards the architectural and historical importance of Nonconformist buildings and has been giving grants to them. The vast majority of Nonconformist buildings are listed grade 2 rather than grade 1 or grade 2 starred and many worthwhile buildings are not listed at all. Some buildings have been promoted in their listing and then grant-aided or the two operations may have taken place at once. It is a matter of concern that many valuable Nonconformist buildings do not appear at the moment to be eligible for help, and I hope that the Minister and English Heritage will consider that.

We must then consider the question of the community charge money, to which that question is related. The Nonconformists are affected as dramatically as anybody by the imposition of the poll tax. They have to raise the stipends of their clergy to meet the fact that the clergy and their wives will be liable to pay the poll tax. If the resources that the Government are putting into the churches as compensation are not directed with equal force towards Nonconformists, they will experience much greater difficulties, as they lack the Church Commissioners' help. The Minister must examine how the money is to be channelled to help the Nonconformist churches with their special problems.

One of the ways that has been suggested to English Heritage for using some of the poll tax money by Marcus Binney, in the article that I cited and in others, brings up another aspect of the problem. He has suggested that the money should be used to establish a redundant chapels fund to parallel the redundant churches fund. Whether it comes from those resources or not—and there are questions to be raised on that—I hope that the Minister and English Heritage will consider that suggestion.

Over the years, it has been argued that the Church of England contributes to a redundant churches fund and therefore the Government can make their contribution; it is a partnership. It is argued that the Nonconformists could have the same if only they put in the sort of money that the Church of England is putting in. It is just not feasible to expect the Nonconformist Churches—under the present pressures—to set up a redundant chapels fund on that sort of basis. They will need significantly more help. Yet such a fund is clearly needed. There are a number of extremely valuable chapels for which no other resources have been found.

It is my wish that the vast majority of historically valuable Nonconfirmist chapels will continue in religious use—in some cases perhaps used by other religious groups or denominations and in some cases put to other uses—and that only a very small minority will be treated as redundant chapels, preserved as they are because of their distinctive character. Clearly, however, there still are some chapels to which that will apply.

We are starting to lose whole categories of buildings. The way things are going now it will not be long before we have few remaining examples of the enormous city centre galleried chapel. It is perhaps the most difficult to maintain. There are also several isolated rural chapels of the 17th and early 18th centuries which are candidates for a redundant chapels fund. An initiative must be taken to get such a fund under way.

The Minister is entitled to ask; what about ecclesiastical exemption? Those of us who are concerned about chapels as buildings of architectural value are entitled to ask the same. Lord Skelmersdale made his statement in 1986 and since then there has been no progress on Nonconformist chapels. The position of the Church of England is

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different. There is a faculty system. Criticisms can be made of it and there are many arguments about bringing it up to date and embracing the cathedrals within it or something like it, but there is simply nothing parallel in Nonconformity.

It is not reasonable to say that we need not have any involvement with planning permission because there is an alternative system. There is none. That is understandable because many Nonconformist denominations are not centrally controlled or directed, and they take a pride in that. For example, the Congregational Federation, which exists to continue the Congregational tradition, did not even want to join the United Reformed Church because it did not want a centrally directed organisation. It is difficult for such a body to establish a faculty system like that of the Church of England. Some system must be developed or we need to have planning permission for interior changes to historic Nonconformist buildings. Moreover, three years after Lord Skelmersdale's statement, we do not know what is meant by "significant" external change, let alone internal alteration. If there is no control over internal alteration, interiors of particular value will disappear. There are only few examples left of important kinds of chapel interior.

As a result of the growing interest in these buildings several people got together—I was involved in this—and started a chapels society to challenge people about the importance of these buildings and help them take care of them. We would be willing to help in the establishment of some mechanism under which advice is channelled to congregations about the value of their buildings. We cannot let things stand still on ecclesiastical exemption. If particular denominations can come up with a practical alternative, that would be acceptable. Where they cannot or do not want to come up with a system of their own, we must look at some other way of ensuring that state aid for the maintenance of historic buildings is matched by some concern for the protection of their integrity.

Non-conformity has a wonderful heritage of buildings, which are architecturally distinct, telling their own history. In many cases they are the people's buildings, raised with substantial individual and community effort. We risk losing some of the best examples and in some cases all examples of a type. As we come to celebrate 300 years since we were legally allowed to erect such buildings, we should give them more attention. It is right that there should be more state aid for them.

8.3 am

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), and congratulate him on choosing this subject and on sitting through the silent watches of the night so that this opportunity would not be missed. What more appropriate time than the eve of Christmas to talk about the future of our great religious buildings? My hon. Friend has also done me a signal service, Sir, and perhaps you, because I had expressed the hope that we might have an Adjournment debate on this on Thursday, and because of your kindness in calling me now, another hon. Member will have a chance to raise a subject instead.

I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) because he has highlighted a problem facing Non-conformist Churches, with a wealth and breadth of knowledge from a long interest which has obviously given enormous benefit to the House. I hope that the Minister listened extremely carefully to what he had to say.

My involvement in this subject goes back as long as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury, I remember as a small boy being taken for the first time to Lincoln cathedral and there falling in love with a great building. I still regard that as the greatest building in Europe, but that is a degree of partisanship for which I hope the House will forgive me.

One of the first things I did when I came to the House was to introduce a Historic Churches Preservation Bill with all-party support. It is good to remind ourselves that, as recently as the early 1970s, there was fierce resistance from Government to the idea of state aid for churches. It was only because of that campaign—in which I believe my Bill played a part—that a committee was set up by Lord Rippon, who was then Secretary of State for the Environment, and the then Bishop of Rochester, Dr. David Say, and a scheme for state aid was worked out, always with all-party accord. Speaking as the chairman of the all-party arts and heritage group, I believe that it is important that we keep these issues outside the realms of party politics.

I am glad to be able to put on record the fact that we have had significant and signal contributions from Secretaries of State of both parties during the time that I have been involved in this campaign. Without casting any aspersions on the others, I shall single out one or two. First of all, there was the late Anthony Crosland, who brought a deep and passionate concern to his role as Secretary of State for the Environment when it came to the preservation of our heritage. Then there was my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), under whose auspices the Historic Buildings Council—on which I was privileged to sit—was transformed into the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, now generally referred to as English Heritage.

It is therefore a great pleasure to see someone with as sensitive an appreciation of beautiful things as my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), who now carries ministerial responsibility for these matters within the Department of the Environment. I hope that she will persuade our right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State that his love for and proficiency in the art of water-colour painting, which depends so much on capturing the beauty of historic buildings, can and should be complemented by a determination to continue to provide the necessary funds for their upkeep.

I could talk at length about the Faculty Jurisdiction Commission on which I sat, about the long arguments that we had about precisely how ecclesiastical exemption should be handled and about the general problem as compared with that in France. However, I shall just make two or three brief points before concentrating on cathedrals.

First of all, it is important to place on record the fact that we now have a system that works with regard to state aid for churches, both those of the established Church and those of other denominations. They are all eligible for state aid, and over the years they have received state aid, just as they have received aid from the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, of which I happen to be a trustee. We

give about £250,000 or more each year to churches of all denominations. That money is given and bequeathed by ordinary people up and down the country.

I am not suggesting that we should be complacent, and I am certainly not seeking to undermine or weaken the powerful argument, which I wholly support, of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. I merely say that the principle in relation to churches was conceded some time ago. The money is there and, although we can always do with more, many of our churches have been significantly helped.

We can also make the point that this country is much better in this respect than France, which is a country that I dearly love and which has a wealth of historic churches. However, because of historic accidents or incidents in France, all fabric of the churches is vested in the state, and that has had a damaging effect. It has taken away the feelings of local pride and patriotism, if I may put it in that way, and people do not feel that local sense of identity and responsibility.

I hope that you will forgive me, Mr. Speaker, if I say that you have magnificently capitalised on that sense of responsibility with our appeal for St. Margaret's church, Westminster. Under your dynamic leadership, we raised £1 million in just over a year. Without wishing to drag you into any political controversy—this is not a controversial subject—I am sure that you will agree that it is a good thing that it is possible to appeal to people's sense of identity and generosity. We are better placed than the French to capitalise on that sense, and we should never take away the need for the local appeal.

I hope that the Minister will be sympathetic to my argument against the VAT burden on churches, and I trust that she will rattle the knocker on the door of No. 11 Downing street in the next few weeks. One burden that churches bear and which, to a degree, takes away much of the good effect of state aid, is VAT. The VAT on repairs to listed buildings especially on churches, should be dealt with. I have urged that churches should be zero-rated or exempted. If that matter could be dealt with, it would be the biggest Christmas present or Easter gift that any Government could give the churches.

I want to dwell upon cathedrals, which are, in the truest sense of the word, a unique group of buildings. They are the greatest collection of buildings in this country. They are the only collection of historic buildings that are not eligible for significant grant from public funds. That is a curious and unfortunate paradox.

We should also remind ourselves that, although there are 42 dioceses in the Church of England and therefore 42 cathedrals, a number of those cathedrals are elevated parish churches. Although they are important and some of them are beautiful buildings. We are talking about the purpose-built cathedrals of what is called the "old foundation", the original cathedrals of the dioceses of England and Wales and of those cathedrals of the "new foundation" that Henry VIII created as cathedrals, such as Gloucester. Therefore, we are dealing with a small group of famous and beautiful buildings.

From Exeter to Durham, appeals are just completed, under way or pending. While my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury was speaking, I jotted down the places where such appeals are going ahead. I apologise in advance to the deans and chapters concerned if I miss any out. Appeals have either been completed, are under way or pending in Salisbury, Winchester, Wells, Lincoln, Lichfield, Ely, Worcester, Gloucester, York and Hereford, to name just a few.

Consider the gems that are being safeguarded—for example, the marvellous work that has just been carried out to safeguard the west front of Wells cathedral, the greatest mediaeval sculpture gallery in the country. Consider the work that has been done to safeguard the lantern tower of Ely cathedral, the most wonderful piece of precision engineering of the middle ages. Even now, people do not quite understand how it was done. Consider what is being done to safeguard the tower at Salisbury, arguably the single most beautiful part of any cathedral in this country.

Consider what is being done at Lincoln and what has recently been done in York to repair the ravages of fire. The skills of separate craftsmen were harnessed to ensure that the great northern cathedral will be in an even better condition in the next century than in this. I am tempted to go on, but I shall not. We must recognise these gems for what they are.

I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will readily concede that any Government who sat back and allowed the spire of Salisbury to collapse, the lantern at Ely to cave in, or the statues on Wells to be eroded out of all recognition, would not deserve to be called a civilised Government, whatever their party or achievements. We all acknowledge the public obligation that any Government have on behalf of us all.

Cathedrals are more than mere buildings. I was slightly surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury did not mention their musical tradition. Within our cathedrals, more than anywhere else, the great tradition of English Church music—arguably our greatest contribution to music—is upheld; but not without enormous cost. You and I, Mr. Speaker, know what it costs to keep a choir in St. Margaret's Westminster. Imagine the cost of a cathedral school.

I recently visited the Dean of Winchester, Trevor Beeston, who was formerly the rector of St. Margaret's and your Chaplain, Mr. Speaker. We discussed the great problems he has in maintaining the fabric of the cathedral. There are also problems, because of the costs, of sustaining the muscial tradition of the place. The cathedrals readily and gladly bear those costs. We must recognise that they do so on behalf of us all, if we believe, as I do, that their musical tradition is as much a part of our heritage as are their arts, architecture and contents.

How can these problems be dealt with? How can cathedrals sustain what they have and the responsibilities that they must continue to bear into the next century? Higherto, it has always been done by appeal, but there are limits to that. Lincoln is now on its fourth or fifth appeal in the past 20 years. Ely made a magnificent effort in raising £4 million from a fairly sparsely populated diocese. But it cannot be done time and time again. You and I, Mr. Speaker, would not be terribly happy if we had to raise another £1 million for St. Margaret's next week. We should find that difficult.

Cathedrals can do other things—charge for admission, for instance, as the Select Committee recommended they should. I have nothing against admission charges. Ely has decided to provide for regular day-to-day expenditure by levying such a charge with the proper exemptions: never on Sundays; a private chapel for prayer set aside so that those who go to pray pay nothing; and so on. But the vast

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majority of people who go to cathedrals go to appreciate the art and architecture, not to pray. One wishes it were otherwise, but we must recognise the facts. It is no more intrusive upon a person's purpose or privacy to make him pay to go to a cathedral than to make him pay to go to a great country house.

Admission charges and appeals cannot and will not of themselves solve the problem. In one form or another, there must be state aid for the cathedrals. I want to commend a scheme to my hon. Friend the Minister. It has been buzzing around in my head for the past few weeks, especially since the controversy surrounding the Mappa Mundi erupted.

I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) here; he is doing so much in such a constructive way to solve that crisis in his constituency and native city. Hereford cathedral is off the beaten track and one must acknowledge that it is not among the top 10 architecturally, beautiful and important though it is. But it has enormous liabilities and responsibilities and must raise several million pounds. There is a dispute about the precise amount, but now is not the time or place to go into that. That it needs several million pounds is not in dispute.

The cathedral has among its contents a wonderful chained library and one of the rarest and most important medieval manuscripts in the world—the Mappa Mundi. It is a unique object. In deciding how best to solve their problems, the dean and chapter of Hereford thought of selling the map. I regret that, and I regret the way that they have gone about it—much as I understand and sympathise with their problems—because I believe that the dean and chapter of any cathedral are its trustees for posterity and should not sell treasures that they have inherited. Communion plate and objects such as the map are as much a part of the fabric and being of the place as the stones of which it is constructed.

By making the provisional decision that they have—I trust that it is a provisional decision, that the map will be withdrawn from sale and they will find another solution—the dean and chapter have created a Mentmore-type catalyst. Those hon. Members who were here at the time will remember when Lord Rosebery's house at Mentmore was put up for sale. We made strenuous efforts to save it for the nation. I asked a private notice question in the House, and I remember taking a deputation to see the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), begging the Government to provide just over £2 million to save Mentmore and its contents for the nation. The Government declined. I make no party point, because, as always, the deputation that I took was all-party. It included Lord Goodman and several Labour Members. We could not persuade the Secretary of State, and at the end of the day the Government ended up paying double what they would have spent on acquiring a few objects for museums. Mentmore is now the headquarters of a slightly bizarre sect. They are looking after the fabric, but the contents have been dispersed.

The catalytic effect of Mentmore was considerable, because it led to pressure for the re-creation of the national land fund, which was set up by Lord Dalton at the end of the war as a memorial to those who perished in it. Fifty million pounds was put on one side to try to preserve some aspects of our heritage. It was never properly used; it was an accounting procedure fiddled by successive Governments. I shall not weary or distress the House by recounting the extraordinary manner in which successive Chancellors of the Exchequer of both parties behaved in this regard; suffice it to say that, as a result of Mentmore, the National Heritage Memorial Fund was established, with a much smaller endowment than it should have had, taking into account what was originally put on one side and the interest that should have accrued therefrom. But it was a significant step, and the fund has been administered brilliantly by Lord Charteris, one of the most distinguished public servants that Britain has had the privilege of having for many years. What he has done with the fund is the most distinguished of all his public duties.

I believe that we should compile a Domesday book or inventory of all the treasures in our great cathedrals. Then the Government should talk to the deans and chapters of those cathedrals about acquiring some of those objects and leaving them in situ. There is a precedent for that.

In Hagley hall in Worcestershire, there is a marvellous set of tapestries which were woven for the room in which they are situated. When the late Lord Cobham died, the present Lord Cobham and his trustees negotiated with the Treasury a deal whereby taxes were part paid in lieu of the surrender of certain objects. There are many precedents for that, going back many years, but the tapestries remain in situ, the argument being that they would have been of much less value, importance and interest displayed anywhere other than their historic and original setting.

That is not the only example; there are others. The first was a great portrait at Donington in Lincolnshire. I suggest that there is a marvellous precedent here for cathedrals. If some of the great objects that they possess, such as the chained library and the Mappa Mundi at Hereford, and St. Chad's gospel in my diocesan cathedral, were transferred in ownership to the state, which then accepted responsibility for the upkeep, the objects remained in situ and the money given was then used as an endowment by which the cathedral's daily needs could be met, we should be moving towards a real solution to our cathedrals' problems.

The proposal has many things to commend it, not least the fact that probably the collective cost of such an operation, bearing in mind the small number of buildings involved, would be little more than the £50 million to which my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury referred in his admirable opening speech. Fifty million pounds is a trivial sum of money. It is less than three times what my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave to safeguard eggs only yesterday. There are egg farmers in my constituency on whose behalf I have pleaded genuinely, but perhaps the Minister will consider the value of an egg when weighed against that of a great cathedral.

If, in a temporary emergency, the Government can quite rightly find £17 million to £20 million for eggs, can they not, for the sake of future generations, think this Christmas of finding about £50 million to ensure that the cathedrals, which are our greatest national treasures and enshrine within them so much of the fabric of our civilisation, will delight and uplift future generations as they have delighted and uplifted us?

8.27 am

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) and congratulate him on securing this debate at this appropriate time. I should also like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) on the wide-ranging set of solutions that he has proposed. I defer to his expertise in this matter. I know the many years that he has spent in looking after these matters, both inside the House and outside, and I pay tribute to his success in so many spheres.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury for the way in which he opened the debate. He remarked on the experience that he was given at the age of 11 when introduced to the Magna Carta. I can duplicate that in a curious way as I was introduced to the Mappa Mundi at the age of 11 and have enjoyed looking at it regularly, almost every time that I have visited the cathedral in Hereford, and showing it to my friends from all over the world. It is a tour de force in the visible history of the world as it was perceived in 1289. It is significant that in January it will have resided in Hereford cathedral for 700 years with very brief trips out in the last couple of years for exhibitions. It is very much part of our heritage.

The Mappa Mundi and the proposal by the dean and chapter to sell it has certainly focused minds on the problem and that is the reason why, at the end of this long session through the night, we are discussing it at this moment.

I want to pay tribute to the Dean of Hereford. He is not the most popular man in Hereford at the moment and he is not the most popular man in my book because he is initiating the sale of the Mappa Mundi. However, I understand his problem. I pay tribute to him because he took on the office of dean in the Hereford diocese six years ago, knowing full well that the cathedral finances were in a parlous state. He has worked tirelessly to put those finances back on to a proper footing.

It is enormously sad that, after many exhortations and the conclusion of an appeal for £1 million, we still need a substantial amount of money. My criticism, which I have made before, is that the way in which the matter has emerged and taken us by surprise is reprehensible. Nevertheless, the problem demonstrates the tip of an iceberg whose size and scope was well identified by my hon. Friends the Members for Salisbury and for Staffordshire, South and by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

It is no light matter to take on the office of dean in a cathedral knowing that one is responsible for its fabric which one must leave in a better state for the next dean than it was when it was taken on. If the Dean of Hereford sometimes looks slightly worried, no doubt as other deans look, I can understand.

The proposed sale of the Mappa Mundi has brought to our attention the stresses faced by deans and chapters across the country. It is a pity that we should consider using the artefacts of a cathedral to deal with a cathedral's fabric. I must dissent slightly from my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South because I believe that Hereford has one of the most exciting cathedrals that I know. Perhaps familiarity brings that home to one. I sit with joy in its warm pink stone glow, which I think is unique among cathedrals—although I accept that fabric problems in the past have meant that the south-western side is not as the architect designed it.

As I visit that cathedral I reflect that the cathedrals that comprise the three-choir circuit have the same problems. Gloucester cathedral has just begun an appeal and Worcestershire's appeal is already under way. All the appeals are transitory and are drawing ever more on the scarce resources of a part of the country which is not so heavily populated as others and which is not so often visited by tourists.

We must therefore look for solutions to those problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury mentioned tourism. Yes, tourists visit Hereford cathedral and others. However, for every solution there is a problem. In that case, the cathedral architect stated in a letter in *The Times* that the wear and tear brought about by tourism constitutes an even greater burden on the fabric. We cannot just take on the question of enhancing tourism without considering the consequences.

My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury mentioned Salisbury cathedral's car parking problems. There is no car park anywhere near Hereford cathedral. An admissions policy has to encompass an admission charge that will encourage visitors and not deter them. It cannot be thought of as a cornucopia or bottomless well.

One must look a little wider than tourism. The overall concept of marketing is certainly important, and it is vital that tourists and other visitors are made aware of what Hereford has to offer. Hereford as a city must recognise that there is a problem. I am delighted that Hereford city council, although not of a persuasion friendly to myself, recognises its duty in that respect.

It is inconceivable from a tourist's point of view, or even from that of an ordinary, everyday resident, to think of Hereford without its cathedral, which dominates the city and is seen by everybody, from every approach. It is part of the city, and regardless of whether one is Church of England or of any other denomination or faith, one cannot gainsay the cathedral's existence and its dominant role in the city. The same applies to other cathedral cities that my hon. Friends and other hon. Members mentioned; they are all part of our heritage. That they are is recognised by the Church, and within the General Synod, by the development of the care of cathedrals measure. It will, on the face of it, provide a first-class mechanism for preventing the sale of artefacts, as a fabric committee will sit to decide such matters and will have a veto. The same will apply to any changes to a cathedral's structure. At present, such matters are for the dean and the chapter to decide.

When the House debates the care of the cathedrals measure in due course, after it has been before the General Synod, it will no doubt support the General Synod's wishes. We shall open one new avenue to cathedral chapters for resolving certain of their financial difficulties. Whether we agree is another matter.

It is incumbent upon the House to recognise that it must offer alternative solutions, and therefore we are right to address ourselves to finding appropriate remedies. I am attracted to the kind of solution suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury in his latter remarks. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South added dimensions, suggesting a different way of providing the same mechanism. I do necessarily follow the line of, in

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effect, turning artefacts into money and displaying them —though I acknowledge that that is what I seek to achieve in respect of Hereford. That is a short-term expedient.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South gave the problem dimensions by relating it to the egg industry's difficulties. It is appropriate to think of that level of funding, so that a grant mechanism may be established that will address both the immediate and long-term repairs to the fabric of our major cathedrals, bearing in mind their overall heritage aspects. Those cathedrals may have been built many years ago for the glory of God, but today they exist to please the soul and the eye of everyone in this country and a wider public. We have a financial responsibility to look to our own taxpayers' money, recognising that Governments have no money other than that of their taxpayers. It will certainly give me pleasure to see my taxes employed in that way.

I wish to raise briefly a nuts and bolts problem. I am surprised at the attitude of English Heritage to Hereford cathedral's difficulty. The cathedral has been negotiating with English Heritage for a grant towards the repair of the college of Vicars Choral, and during the ensuing correspondence it has been given a verbal go-ahead to start work in view of the urgent need for the repairs. On 18 November, the day after it was announced that Mappa Mundi was to be offered for sale, English Heritage wrote to the cathedral architects saying, in effect, "We no longer play the game of offering grants. You are about to receive some money, and we do not give money where money is already in hand."

I hope that that was a knee-jerk reaction—and an understandable one—to a change in circumstances. I also hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will ask English Heritage to reconsider. I should like to think that it will continue its grant aid until the cathedral's problem is resolved, by whatever means, and then review the position. The cathedral has offered to repay with interest any grant moneys given by English Heritage which could be used now, as and when the cathedral receives any funds from the sale or from whatever alternative mechanism it develops to resolve the problem. I thought that a very reasonable approach, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to ask English Heritage to enable such important work to go ahead.

We have a responsibility, both nationally and locally. I want a solution which reflects the local pride and sense of proprietorship inspired by the cathedral, and which also recognises that it is there for a far wider enjoyment.

8.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): This has been a thoughtful and interesting debate on a subject of great importance and interest. All hon. Members' contributions have shown personal commitment and depth of experience, but I particularly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on gaining the debate in the first place. I am not sure when he went to Salisbury cathedral school, or whether he was so young that the Jesuits could say that they had got him quickly enough to implant a love of cathedrals firmly in his mind for ever —not that he went to a Jesuit school; I was merely making an analogy.

Churches are one of the most precious components of our heritage. Hon. Members have paid tribute to particular churches or cathedrals that have meant much to them—gems being safeguarded. As my hon. Friend said, more people visit our churches and cathedrals than visit all the National Trust properties and ancient monuments put together.

There is widespread evidence of the loving care with which local communities have supported their churches over the centuries. Just as with other historic buildings, those best placed to cherish and care for them are the owners—the users. In that sense a church or chapel belongs to its congregation in much the same way as the stately home belongs to its incumbent for the time being. In each case it is seen as a duty to hand it down to future generations. It is a sense of stewardship as much as one of ownership. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) referred to the sense of local identity and responsibility generated by people having a building in their midst that is of spiritual significance as well as having a historic heritage.

When the Government came to power in 1979 we inherited a system of state aid for parish churches and chapels, worked out after several years of negotiation between Government and Churches. It is a good system which after 11 years seems to be standing the test of time well, and in England it is administered by English Heritage. For this purpose, outstanding churches—which generally mean most grade I or grade II star listed churches—are eligible for repair grants under section 3A of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953. Only parish churches and their non-Anglican equivalents are eligible. Cathedrals, with which I shall deal in a few moments, are excluded.

I should stress that the administration of the scheme and the terms on which grants are offered are entirely matters for English Heritage. We do not interfere. We do not second-guess. It is also English Heritage's responsibility to decide how much of its budget should be allocated to this heading, within the normal Treasury guidelines. I would point out to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that recently I visited a magnificent Nonconformist chapel—the Jireh chapel in Lewes. It is a wonderfully original chapel. Its original furnishings are intact. The chapel belongs to a Calvinistic sect. With most generous and substantial grant from English Heritage the chapel is being carefully and meticulously restored.

We want English Heritage to be provided with adequate resources for the tasks to which we consider it should give priority. That is why, in the context of discussions with the Churches about the community charge, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that he would be taking three steps to offset the extra costs for Churches of all denominations.

First, it has been decided that non-domestic buildings that are used to support the organisation of religious worship will qualify for 100 per cent. rate relief from 1 April 1990.

Secondly, we shall be increasing the resources for the redundant churches fund that is financed jointly by the Department and the Church Commissioners. We are also increasing the Department's share of the fund's grant in aid from 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. That will indirectly benefit the Church of England by freeing resources for the living Church.

Thirdly, we are providing an extra £3 million a year to English Heritage from 1990-91 onwards to enable it to increase its programme of historic church repair grants. Again, that is an indirect form of assistance, but it will provide much-needed relief for congregations, which are struggling under heavy maintenance burdens. It will also help to stave off the threat of redundancy in many cases. All denominations will benefit from it.

A church that is still in use as part of an active community is much more likely to be looked after. Hon. Members know of the ingenuity of many congregations in raising funds. The assistance that English Heritage gives can play a vital role in gaining and multiplying private resources and giving congregations the confidence to carry on.

Sometimes there is no choice and churches have to be declared redundant. The redundant churches fund provides help for redundant Anglican churches. That worthy body has now been in existence for over 20 years. By preserving the best of our historic churches that no longer have a regular pastoral use, we are responding to a secular delight in beautiful buildings and architecture as well as to the religious dimension. It is therefore right that the nation as a whole, the wider community, should pay its share. Partnership arrangements are therefore entirely appropriate.

We have recently reviewed the funding of the redundant churches fund. As the order under which we pay it will expire at the end of March 1989, we have considered with the redundant churches fund and the Church Commissioners, our partners in the payment, how much we should allocate to the fund for the next quinquennium. We recognise also that the Government's community charge will place additional burdens on Churches. That is why we propose to increase the fund's budget in real terms and to raise the Government's percentage contribution to the fund from 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. in the next quinquennium. Both the Department and the Church Commissioners agree that the time is right to carry out a review of the remit, the operation and the procedures of the fund, to ensure that we have struck the right balance. We are considering the precise scope of that review with the Church Commissioners.

My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury referred to the suggestion that there should be a fund for redundant Nonconformist churches and chapels. English Heritage would have to consider that proposal. I know that it is considering ways in which some of the additional resources that have been allocated to church repairs might be used to benefit the most important redundant churches of the Roman Catholic and Nonconformist denominations. Some argue that that might entail support for an independent equivalent of the redundant churches fund. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's suggestion when I consider the matter further.

As for the cathedrals, first I shall say a few words about the Mappa Mundi. Many hon. Members have mentioned it, in particular my hon. Friend the member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), who has played a key role in our discussions in this place on that most valued item. It is important to recognise that the proposal by the dean and chapter to sell the map appears to be motivated by concerns which range considerably more widely than the physical fabric. It is understood that the cathedral recently had a successful appeal and now has most of what it needs for the immediate future. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South paid tribute to the endeavours of the dean in seeking the financial security of the cathedral.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts has stated in the House his wish that a solution could be achieved involving private and public sectors that would be acceptable to all parties. He firmly believes that it should be possible to find a solution that would keep the map in Britain. He is working with all the parties involved to that end.

My hon. Friend mentioned the care of cathedrals measure. We were very glad to see that the draft care of cathedrals measure gained the broad approval of the General Synod in November. It is a most encouraging move, after the previous difficulties encountered by the earlier draft in the February session of Synod. It is in all our interests—the Government's as well as the Church of England's—to ensure that there is an effective system for safeguarding the fabric of the cathedrals, which form such an important and magnificent part of our national heritage, and for ensuring that major building works to them are given careful consideration.

The work of mission, of course, is the Church's task. I venture the thought that an awareness of heritage can be part of mission; a beautiful historic well-cared-for building can itself be an inspiration and an aid to worship. That is not to suggest that all cathedrals must remain pickled in Gothic, or neo-Gothic, aspic—far from it. I am sure that mission, like civilisation itself, must be alive and responsive to the present. It is surely right to ensure that the new blends appropriately with the old, in both the secular and the ecclesiastical heritage.

By ensuring scope for public consultation over proposals, including proposals for the sale of important historical or artistic objects, the Measure would enable all the aspects of a proposed sale to be carefully considered before it could take place. This is clearly highly relevant to the Mappa Mundi.

On the general question of state aid for cathedral buildings, they are, as I made clear, excluded from English Heritage's scheme of repair grants. English Heritage is maintaining the practice established in 1977 when state aid for historic churches was first introduced. In discussion with the Government of the day, the Church of England recommended that parish churches should be given priority. That was based on the Church's own belief that cathedrals were very much better placed than parish churches to raise substantial sums of money from the public and other private sources, because of their pre-eminent position as centres of pilgrimage, culture and tourism. It is significant that no major cathedral restoration appeal to date has failed. Tribute has been paid to the many magnificent appeals in recent years and to the valiant efforts by many deans and chapters to maximise the revenue from their cathedrals.

If the Church of England now thinks that circumstances have changed so radically since 1977 that the basis of the policy is out of date, it must make representations to English Heritage, which will be happy to discuss the matter. I have heard the strength of feeling among hon. Members during the debate. Our understanding of the feeling among the officers of the General Synod is that the position has not changed and the needs of parish churches are greater now than ever. We are confident that our policy

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of providing extra resources for English Heritage for historic churches—including non-Anglican churches—is the right one.

Hon. Members have made other suggestions about how cathedrals should be considered, and I shall certainly give them further thought.

Although the Department's heritage budget has risen from about £31 million in 1979-80 to more than £90 million in 1988-89, public resources for the heritage are clearly not unlimited. If English Heritage were to start grant-aiding cathedrals on any significant scale, there would have to be reordered priorities within its historic churches repair grants budget.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed mentioned ecclesiastical exemption. That is a tricky subject. When state aid was introduced for parish churches in 1977, the Government agreed that it would be unnecessary to legislate on the exemption for the initial trial period while the Church of England undertook to carry out a review of its internal faculty jurisdictions system. The faculty jurisdiction committee was set up in 1980 under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Chichester and it reported in 1984. It recommended some revision of the existing system for parish churches, particularly to make the system more accessible by increasing publicity and consultation. It also recommended a new statutory system for cathedrals in place of the advisory system which had operated previously. I understand that the Church felt that, if it was to overhaul its system, it should be assured of retaining ecclesiastical exemptions.

It has taken the Church of England considerable time to bring into effect the reforms promised in the 1984 report. Many of the conservation bodies have expressed considerable concern about the delay and have wondered publicly whether the Church of England is serious in its commitment. As I have said, we are encouraged by the progress made so far on the draft cathedrals Measure. Obviously, we shall watch the situation closely. Meanwhile, we have been working on the contents of the proposed order. It has not been easy to translate Lord Skelmersdale's original commitment into action. However, I hope to be able to resolve the matter soon.

I appreciate the various contributions that have been made to the important debate. This is a timely occasion on which to discuss a matter of great concern to hon. Members. We value the significance of church buildings in our national heritage and take the needs of historic churches seriously. That can be seen from the fact that offers of repair grants have risen from about £500,000 in 1978-79 to a budgeted £6 million in the current financial year. By 1990-91, thanks to the additional resources we provided, it is expected to rise to £9 million. I know that English Heritage will continue to give priority to the programme and we shall be discussing regularly with it ways in which assistance for historic churches and buildings can be targeted equitably and cost-effectively. I shall draw the valuable, thoughtful and considered responses of hon. Members to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Racial Harassment

8.57 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Tens of thousands of families in Britain will have to endure misery, unpleasantness and the fear of racial harassment this Christmas and throughout the year. They will not understand the procedures of the House. We have not discussed racial harassment all year and we have sat through the night but we can allocate only three minutes to debate their plight. They will think that we are ridiculing their plight and that this is a racist Parliament, and they are probably right.

Many cases are horrific and we could have spent the night just talking about them. For example, I am currently dealing with a case involving a single woman with five children who was a victim of a racial attack. The police put her in the cells for four hours. Also, 300 white youths attacked the Loughborough Hindu festival and the police were tardy in arriving to assist. That led to a demonstration by the Hindu community at the police station.

There is also the case of a couple who were refused a transfer after racial harassment because it was said that they had left the country and gone to Arabia for a year. In fact, they lived in Arabia house in Tower Hamlets. That local authority mistake left them to be further harassed.

Police figures show that in 1987 there was a 26 per cent. increase in racial attacks in the metropolitan police area. Racial harassment should be a specific criminal offence. The Government have dilly-dallied too long. They should galvanise the police to make swift responses whenever harassment occurs and to push ahead with prosecutions. I will give the Minister a minute to reply.

8.59 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am extremely grateful to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for allowing me a minute.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman did not mean what he said when he accused the House of being racist. He was quite wrong, but these issues must be addressed. He seems to have forgotten the Public Order Act 1986, which has extended the offence of incitement to racial hatred. It is clear that the Government are moving swiftly when and where they can to introduce new measures where possible.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): What research has been done into the workings of the 1986 Act and how many prosecutions and successful convictions have been obtained under it? There is a fear that, although the framework is there, it is not being implemented.

Mr. Patten: I am extremely glad that the hon. Gentleman asked that question. Information available centrally shows that in 1987 there were six prosecutions under sections 18 to 23 of the Act for racial harassment. No information is available for 1988——

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

PETITION

Settle-Carlisle Railway

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I wish to present a petition bearing 2,000 signatures collected by Victor and Elizabeth Dent of Woodsmoor in my constituency seeking the continuation of the most beautiful of railway lines—the Settle-Carlisle railway. I humbly present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Stanley Royd Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

9.1 am

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I am pleased to have this opportunity to express concern about staffing procedures and staffing in general at the Stanley Royd hospital, which is situated in my constituency.

Stanley Royd hospital is part of a major hospital complex. The site area of the total facility is 100 acres, of which three quarters form the grounds of Stanley Royd hospital. It serves the population of Ossett, Stanley, Wrenthorpe and Wakefield city area, and it accommodates the mentally ill and elderly severely mentally infirm. It provided a full range of psychiatric services, a clinic, a day hospital and occupational and industrial therapy, and included a regional secure unit.

In 1936, the hospital could accommodate 2,678 patients, but in 1984 there were only just over 830. In August 1984, there was a severe outbreak of food poisoning that affected just over half the patients and resulted in the deaths of 19.

A public inquiry was held to investigate the outbreak of food poisoning, which took over a year to report. The report was presented to the Secretary of State in January 1986. The cause of the food poisoning was the preparation of food in an old, unworthy and unhealthy kitchen in the hospital. The kitchen was significantly criticised by the inquiry, and reference was made to the lack of capital to improve facilities, which was the true problem. If only a proportion of the money spent on cook-chill had been spent on the kitchen, that outbreak of salmonella food poisoning could have been avoided.

The inquiry recommended that the regional health authority should consider withdrawing funds from Stanley Royd hospital as population decreased. It also criticised understaffing in the hospital. The kitchen was understaffed, with the result that cleaning schedules fell into arrears. Considerable evidence was given to the inquiry about staffing levels, and Stanley Royd has had the lowest staff-patient ratio in the district. In 1984, there were 38 fewer qualified nurses than were allowed on the establishment. Because of unqualified nurses and student nurses, that deficit was reduced to 29. It has always been hard to recruit qualified staff at that hospital. The present management are not working in the best interests of the hospital with the application of the present grading structure.

I ask for a full investigation into the way in which regrading has been applied at Stanley Royd hospital, particularly in view of the comments that were made in the inquiry report on staffing levels and the food poisoning outbreak. That investigation should also cover the proposed cook-chill system and its implementation. The Minister advised of amendments to the original 1980 guidelines for the application of cook-chill food processing, but the amendments have been withdrawn because of the listeria case that has come about in the neighbouring district health authority area of Leeds.

Because of the history of Stanley Royd to which I have referred and the public inquiry's recommendations, I ask the Minister to assure me that the cook-chill food process which is proposed for Stanley Royd hospital will not be implemented until the amended guidelines to the 1980

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guide are issued by his Department. The new guidelines should be applied when the change in food preparation and distribution system is in place in Stanley Royd hospital. Failure to give me that assurance today will show a lack of compassion on the part of the Minister towards people in my constituency who suffered from past mismanagement, and feelings in my constituency will be heightened if the new Department of Health guidelines are not applied. Will the Minister address that matter?

Staff at all levels at Stanley Royd hospital have not only suffered the trauma of 1984, when much publicity was given to the salmonella outbreak, but been under immense pressure. Morale was low on that occasion. Morale is low now because of the way in which grading structures have been applied.

Paragraph 118 of the inquiry's report states:

"we heard a considerable amount about nursing levels from Mr. McEnroe, the District Nursing Officer, who agreed that Stanley Royd had one of the lowest staff-patient ratios in the district."

It goes on:

"In 1984 the aim was to have a ratio of qualified to unqualified staff of 60/40, at that time it was 52/48."

On the night shift of 30 November this year, the funded establishment was 114·5 full-time equivalent nurses. In post were 99·5, a shortfall of 15 staff or 17 per cent. of the establishment. Of those 99·5 staff, 43·25 were nursing assistants. In addition to the 17 per cent. shortage of nurses, 43 per cent. were unqualified. They are the very people who significantly carry the work load in the 26 wards of Stanley Royd hospital.

All those nursing assistants are paid on the lowest possible grade—grade A—and because of their grading as laid down by the Department of Health, all of them must be supervised. On the night of 30 November—a typical working night—only 6·25 of the other 56 staff were sisters or nurses in charge. Because on the night shift there is no senior management, two of the 6·25 nurses were acting as care group managers, leaving just over four nurses or sisters or nurses in charge on duty for the 26 wards.

The problem of supervision at Stanley Royd is dramatically highlighted by an examination of the composition of the staff on duty. In addition to the hospital being 17 nurses short and to 43 of the 99 nurses on duty being nursing assistants, a further 41 nurses were enrolled nurses on grades C and D, the lowest grades in the structure. The staffing malaise at Stanley Royd, with particular reference to the night shift, is such that out of 99 nurses—of whom two were taken to manage the hospital leaving 97—84 are in the lowest paid majority and are untrained to attend to patients in 26 wards.

According to the formula set by the Department of Health, all those 84 nurses require supervision by the 13 or 14 charge nurses and staff nurses—of whom 10 are staff nurses—who are also paid the D and E grades, which are minimum grades in the supervisory area—the lower grade in the grading structure. It is significant that, because of the shortage of staff, nurses are having to work their shift without a meal break, with no extra pay for the extra work. It is diabolical that in 1988 people should have to work through their meal breaks because the authority will not recruit extra qualified staff.

The imperfect staffing is cruel to those employed in Stanley Royd hospital, and should not be allowed to continue. I ask the Minister to take a personal interest in the concern that I have expressed, with a view to reviewing the staff grades at Stanley Royd, which are abysmally inadequate to reward people for the work that they are doing. I make that request because the management has failed in its duty to carry out a proper and fair assessment of gradings.

If the Minister would agree to investigate the matter, I would rest my case there. If he does not agree to do that, I must remonstrate and place more of the cruel anomalies of mismanagement on the official record. I am determined to continue to highlight what is happening at Stanley Royd hospital until justice is obtained for the people who work there.

The Minister will undoubtedly refer to the new chairman, who was appointed recently, and tell me to give him a chance. But I say to the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority and the Minister that they have deserted the cause of the Wakefield health authority. I make that allegation because the Department of Health accepted the report and findings of the regional inquiry of July this year into the management of Wakefield district health authority.

That report recommended that Sir Jack Smart should be replaced as chairman by a person who had no connection with the authority as at present constituted. It must be made clear that Mr. Brian Hayward, who is now the chairman, has been involved with Wakefield district health authority because he was chairman of a very important committee which reported on the controversial cook-chill system of providing meals in the Wakefield district health authority area. It is strongly suspected that the appointment of Mr. Brian Hayward is to ensure that the cook-chill system is applied, so as to justify the enormous sums spent on this project, to which the regional health authority, of which Mr. Hayward was a member, is committed. The scenario involving Wakefield district health authority continues.

The appointment of Mr. Hayward signifies how much of a travesty of justice that regional inquiry was, and what a charade were the gradings of nurses under the recent wage awards. No negotiations with the nurses' representatives took place. Letters were sent to nurses informing them that they would be paid on grade E, but a few weeks later they were informed that they would be downgraded to grade D.

Morale is low. People are working under great stress. There is a shortage of trained nurses, and people are doing the work but are not paid adequately. Meal breaks cannot be taken because there is no one to cover. At times, supervision is wholly inadquate. There is no provision to replace nurses off sick or on holiday. The training programme is being cut. On the short-term mental illness training programme for 1989-90, there is a cut of 15 people. How can any Government or authority endorse such a programme of devastation, particularly in view of the public inquiry into salmonella food poisoning in 1984, which on page 112 recommends:

"efforts to improve the ratio of qualified to unqualified staff must continue and the recruitment of all staff to at least the presently permitted establishment should be pursued with vigour."

Two years after the report was presented, the hospital is still not staffed to establishment.

What is the Minister doing about that? Will he investigate staffing levels and the work load of nurses who

have to care for patients in hospital in order to give families at home a rest? These patients are not hospital-orientated, and they require more attention. Will he investigate the management structure of the hospital on the night shift when charge nurses are withdrawn from supervisory duties? Will he give an assurance that, before the cook-chill meals system is applied by Wakefield district health authority, the guidelines amending the 1980 Ministry of Health guidelines will be applied? Will he consider the matter to be serious? Finally, will he visit the hospital and listen to the views of all those involved in its running and management, and those of the nurses?

9.17 am

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): In looking for something kind to say at Christmas, the best thing I can say about the speech by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is that it was not as outrageous as that to which the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) treated us the last time this matter was discussed in the House as recently as 25 October.

At that time the hon. Member for Wakefield made what may turn out to be the highly expensive mistake of choosing to disseminate some of his outrageous allegations to the press before speaking in the Chamber. As a result, what he said is now the subject of legal action. So I have nothing further to say on cook-chill and nothing further to add to what my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said in reply to that debate.

It is an interesting starting point for this debate that the hon. Gentleman should be trying to stir the pot about what is happening in the Stanley Royd hospital. He knows of the schisms and difficulties in Wakefield district health authority. I notice somewhat disobliging references to Mr. Brian Hayward and it is evidence of the way in which politics has so catastrophically intervened in the affairs of that authority that he should speak so of Mr. Hayward, notwithstanding Mr. Hayward's career throughout his working life as a trade union official. One would have expected that the hon. Gentleman would want to work with Mr. Hayward to improve the situation within the district health authority, instead of which, he and his hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield appear to be siding with dissident elements in the district health authority with the aim and impact of perpetuating the schisms and difficulties that have caused everyone who cares about the Health Service so much distress in Wakefield, and which I hope the appointment of Mr. Hayward will do much to rectify.

Suffice it to say, before we turn to the detail of the situation at the Stanley Royd hospital, which I am more than content to do, I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that this appears to be the last stand—the Alamo—for COHSE militancy. It is one of the last places in the country where COHSE militants are maintaining industrial action. It is regrettable that the hon. Gentleman, who would not normally be regarded as one of the more militant Members of the House, should feel that his duty to his constituents is not to advise people to get on with their work in accordance with the professional standards that the community so respects and admires in nurses, and to eschew industrial action, but feel that he should act as the spokesman for a narrow and sectarian trade union view —a view which by no stretch of the imagination could be thought to be either in the best interests of the Health Service or of his local community, who would like to see the Wakefield district health authority respond perhaps rather better to some of the challenges that face it than it has in the past.

None of us wants the Wakefield district health authority to lag behind what is happening in the rest of the country, where there is not this political dogfight. Apparently, that even extends to the local authority having lost confidence in two of the members of the authority which it nominated, including one of those most prominent as a COHSE official, who no doubt briefed the hon. Gentleman for this debate. We want to see an end to some of this nonsense. We want the Wakefield district health authority to be well run. However, it will only achieve that if community-elected representatives are prepared to rally round and be responsible.

I would like to spend the rest of the time available to me saying a little about the nurses' new grading structure, because we speak in a month when the largest pay rise ever paid to the nursing profession in the history of the NHS is arriving in nurses' pay packets, including in most cases substantial sums of back pay. As with the greatly improved industrial relations climate nationally—alas, not entirely shared at Wakefield—nurses, too, are realising what an outstanding deal this is, not only because of the cash benefits, but because the new structure allows nurses for the first time a proper career ladder in clinical medicine.

Of course, one understands—it is inevitable—that the picture throughout the country will vary. It was never envisaged that every nurse would get the same increase as the next. That would have been a straightforward pay award. We were petitioned by the Royal College of Nursing and others to carry out a regrading exercise, and everyone knew that there would be a good spread. Inevitably, the mental institutions, where there is a high level of dedicated, but nevertheless unqualified nursing staff—nursing auxiliaries—obviously will not see as many large rises as has been the case in a number of the acute units. That is an inevitable consequence of the way in which medicine is structured today.

I point out to those nursing auxiliaries who remain dissatisfied that, notwithstanding their unqualified status, all of them have received between 7·5 per cent. and 10 per cent. this year. That compares with the average increase for ancillary workers in the NHS as a whole—who are not deemed to be part of the nursing profession, as nursing auxiliaries are—of between 5 per cent. and 5·9 per cent. The mere fact that, in receiving 7·5 per cent. to 10 per cent., they have not received the large increases that have been determined for many sisters and staff nurses, should not disguise the fact that they have done far better than any other ancillary workers within the Service and have benefited enormously from the Government's decision, first, to have an independent pay review body and, secondly, to treat auxiliary nurses as part of the nursing profession, which is of great assistance to them in establishing their status. Overall, we believe that this is a good deal for nurses and that the hospital service is working efficiently and effectively as it has always done.

Mr. O'Brien *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman spoke for more than 15 minutes and I now intend to——

Mr. O'Brien: Answer the debate.

Mr. Mellor: The more the hon. Gentleman barracks me the less time I shall have——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Answer the debate, then.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman can shout like a fog horn, but he is not in order. Such interruptions will simply give me less time to answer the debate.

I have dealt with the extremely relevant points that were raised by the hon. Member for Normanton and I shall now consider the effect of the regrading structure on the Stanley Royd hospital. There is no such thing as a national average that applies to all institutions. At Stanley Royd, more nursing assistants, enrolled nurses and staff nurses have gone on to the basic grade, but, on the other hand, many enrolled nurses have gone onto the higher grade of E than is true of the national average. In fact, 98 per cent. of sisters and charge nurses have gone onto the higher grade of G at that hospital, compared with 61 per cent. for England.

The difference between 98 per cent. and 61 per cent. is striking and it shows that the reason for dissension at Stanley Royd—that, somehow or other, staff have done worse than any other in the country—cannot be justified. It is inevitable that there will be different grading outcomes, but I believe that Stanley Royd has come out well.

Mr. O'Brien: What about the shortages?

Mr. Mellor: It is true that we have spent most of this decade trying to build up the pay and conditions of the nursing profession from the disgraceful state in which it was left by the last Labour Government. During the lifetime of that Government, who cared rhetorically but failed to care in terms of their practical policies, there was a fall——

Mr. O'Brien *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Mellor: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head—they are facts that cannot be denied.

Under the previous Labour Government, nurses' pay fell by 20 per cent. in real terms. Under this Government, nurses' pay has increased dramatically and many nurses are now 50 per cent. better off in real terms than they were under the Labour Government. In 1979, a sister at the top of her scale earned £96 a week. That same nursing sister can now earn at least £270 a week and in many cases markedly more than £300 a week. Such pay relates well to the attractiveness of nursing within the job market.

There has been no block grading at Stanley Royd. On the contrary, the figures on the outcome of the regrading exercise for individual districts show that individual managers have gone about setting out the new grading structure in accordance with how they judge the local conditions. We have every confidence in the way in which the regrading exercise has been carried out at Stanley Royd.

If there are problems with the regrading structure at any individual hospital, there is a right of appeal that has been properly negotiated with the unions. It is a key part of the structure. It is absolutely——

Mr. O'Brien: No negotiations took place.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman seems singularly uninformed even at 9 o'clock on a December morning.

Some two and a half years of negotiations were conducted regarding the new grading structure—Stanley Royd does not stand outside that two-and-a-half-year consultation.

The hon. Member for Normanton and his colleagues stand for the national bargaining sytem. It may well be that most people who look for sensible progress within the NHS no longer regard that national bargaining system as essential. It is no good the hon. Member for Normanton wanting home rule for Stanley Royd hospital, because he and his colleagues stand four square behind the national bargaining system. The regrading structure took two and a half years to negotiate and, as a result of the negotiations, there is an appeals system. In fact, such an appeal system existed for a long time before those negotiations.

What is disgraceful is that unions will agree to a regrading structure, which has an appeals system to pick up any anomalies and which exists to be invoked, but political agitators within COHSE and NUPE, supported by hon. Gentlemen such as the hon. Member for Normanton, are prepared to accept industrial action. That is a return to the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s—the hon. Member for Normanton does not appear to have left those days. The unions seek a return to those days instead of going forward in a sensible way, geared to the good of the NHS rather than considering it a political battlefield.

As long as there is industrial action at hospitals such as Stanley Royd, there will be no satisfactory outcome for anyone. Certainly no one will benefit from any grading appeal while they are taking industrial action.

Even at this eleventh hour, I hope that the hon. Member for Normanton will try to play a constructive role in the affairs of his local health authority.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 20 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL
(By Order)

Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 12 January.

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL
[Lords] (By Order)

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 January.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Management Qualifications

1. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of undergraduates are currently taking degrees or other qualifications in management or management-related subjects; what was the figure 10 years ago; and what is the figure for other major west European countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): In 1987, 18 per cent. of undergraduates were studying management or management-related subjects. The equivalent figure for 1980, the earliest year for which comparable figures are available, was 16 per cent. These figures relate to universities in Great Britain and polytechnics and colleges in England.

Comparisons with other major west European countries are difficult, given difficulties of definition, but our best estimates are, France 9 per cent., Germany 3 per cent., Italy 2 per cent. and Spain 5 per cent.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not the fault of higher education in this country that, according to the Handy report, only 24 per cent. of British managers have a first degree or equivalent qualification, whereas the equivalent figures for the United States and West Germany are 84 per cent. and 64 per cent. respectively? Will my hon. Friend therefore use his best endeavours to get British industry to recognise where its self-interest lies, especially against a background in which the CBI and the British Institute of Management recognise that there is a close correlation between an educated work force and management and higher productivity?

Mr. Jackson: I am not sure whether I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that any sort of degree is what a manager needs. Managers need adequate training in relevant skills. That is what lies behind the management charter initiative, which the Government strongly support —both directly and as an employer. We urge industry and other employers to become members of that initiative so that even more employees will have a chance to develop essential management skills.

Sir John Stokes: Does my hon. Friend agree that, important though academic qualifications are—we all realise that—the essentials for a manager are personal qualities such as inventiveness, leadership, courage and decision, which are not always to be learnt at university?

Mr. Jackson: I agree with my hon. Friend and I draw his attention to the interesting enterprise and higher education initiative sponsored by the Department of Employment and designed to foster precisely those qualities among university students.

National Curriculum

2. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the case for a full science programme in the national curriculum.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The National Curriculum Council has recommended that the majority of science pupils in years four and five in secondary school should work to a double GCSE award taking up about 20 per cent. of curriculum time, but that a choice of taking one GCSE award should be available to some taking up about 12·5 per cent. of time. I have accepted that recommendation, and this is reflected in the draft orders which I published yesterday.

Mr. Macdonald: Does not the right hon. Gentleman's failure to insist on a 20 per cent. science element in the national curriculum mean that the original idea for a broad national curriculum is now dead and that the curriculum will do nothing to increase the number of girls studying science at A-level, nothing to increase the number of graduates studying science at university and nothing to diminish the ignorance in society about science, which does such great harm to our economy?

Mr. Baker: The double award science will cover 17 attainment targets and the single award, which is very demanding, will cover 10. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the system will be broad and balanced. I was a little puzzled that the hon. Gentleman asked me that question, coming as he does from Scotland—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—because the Scottish system is the kind that the national curriculum is about to recommend.

Mr. Foulkes: Try learning science in Gaelic.

Mr. Baker: Even those pupils in Scotland who try to learn in Gaelic, or whatever language, can spend varying amounts of time on science—from 10 per cent. up to 30 per cent.—and I shall introduce that flexibility into the English education system.

Mr. Forman: I welcome my right hon. Friend's initial reply, but will he take account of the fact that many Conservative Members would like to see the fullest

possible contribution of science to the national curriculum? If the potential shortage of teachers could be a difficulty in that regard, will he consider carefully the possibility of bringing people of mature years from the private sector later in their careers?

Mr. Baker: I assure my hon. Friend that I, too, want to see much more science studied at school and this proposal represents a big improvement. About one third of our young people at school give up science at the age of 14, but under the national curriculum every boy and girl, particularly girls, will have to take it up to the age of 16, along with technology. That is an enormous step forward.

I want to encourage more people to come into the teaching profession who have had other careers, particularly in business and I have proposals, on which we are consulting, to ease their entry into the teaching profession. Such people have a lot to offer.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State must be aware that by rejecting the recommendations of his own science working party he has produced a downgraded two-tier science curriculum that virtually no one in education wants and which will hit the education of a great many people, especially that of girls. Why does he not accept and admit that he has taken this step because of the alarming, and increasing, shortage of science teachers reflected in a 15 per cent. drop in entrants to chemistry teaching? Does he not realise that people outside are also deeply concerned about his proposals, and that Mr. Denis Filer, director general of the Engineering Council has said that his council believes that the narrower syllabus will be insufficient to deliver an adequate balanced science programme to all young people?

Mr. Baker: The proposals before the House in the draft orders represent a tremendous and significant improvement in science in schools. It did not meet with all that much support when we debated the matter in the Standing Committee on the Education Reform Bill, but I leave that aside. In addition to science, all children up to the age of 16 will now have to take technology. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have not rejected the proposals of the National Curriculum Council—a body which, by statute, advises me. The council advised me to do this and I have accepted its advice. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that one third of the schools which made representations said that they wanted that flexibility—the very flexibility that I was pressed to introduce into the curriculum by the Opposition in Committee.

City Technology Colleges

3. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made in finding sites for city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baker: The CTC programme continues to make excellent progress. Kinghurst CTC opened in September, Nottingham and Teesside CTCs will open next year, and there are plans for other CTCs in 1990, including one in Bradford.

Mr. Irvine: Is it not sadly true that my right hon. Friend's task of finding suitable sites for CTCs has been made immeasurably more difficult by the refusal of Labour-controlled councils in deprived inner-city areas to co-operate in finding and making available such sites? Is it not also true that it is precisely the parents and children who live in those deprived inner-city areas, controlled by such councils, who stand to gain most from the introduction of CTCs?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is completely correct. Some authorities are willing to co-operate in providing sites but the great majority—virtually all of them Labour-controlled—are not. We now have sponsors for more than the 20 CTCs that I want to set up. We can go above 20 and we are now searching for sites. Those schools are designed to help children from the deprived inner cities. Where they have been set up they are doing so and will continue to do so.

Mr. Clelland: The Secretary of State will be aware that one of the sites that he has in mind is in Gateshead in my constituency, but is he aware that the amount of money that he intends to spend on that school is more than the total that he has allowed the local authority for all its schools? Is not that a disgrace? Since it was recently revealed that only 7 per cent. of his hon. Friends support priority expenditure in this area, is it not time that he abandoned the idea?

Mr. Baker: On the contrary, the CTCs are popular schools. They have been by far the most popular schools wherever they have been set up. The applications for Kingshurst already show that, as do the applications for those in Middlesbrough and Nottingham which are not even open yet. There have been substantial contributions from the private sector. More than £31 million has been pledged by the private sector for this initiative. No other education effort has brought forth such support from the private business world.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that surplus land and buildings held by local education authorities are held in trust? Should they not make that surplus available to possible CTCs rather than forcing very expensive new-build on fresh land—as was necessary in Nottingham, although I warmly welcome the college being built in that city?

Mr. Baker: I was happy to lay the foundation stone about three weeks ago. That college will be very successful—a beacon in technological education. It was only when the Conservatives had control of Nottingham city council that planning permission was given, because the Conservatives had the wisdom to give it. I am sure that control of Nottingham city council will return to us in the future. Far too many councils have a dog-in-the-manger attitude, sitting on underutilised land and empty schools when it would be much better to make those buildings available for CTCs.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to announce his decision about the suggestion that I put to him in writing immediately after the announcement of the Bradford CTC—that parents in Bradford should be balloted to decide whether available taxpayers' money amounting to £8 million should be spent on a CTC in Bradford or on improving existing schools there, many of which are in a deplorable condition?

Mr. Baker: This year's capital programme for Bradford was substantially expanded when I approved the figures only a year ago. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the

Bradford school will go ahead. The land has now been bought and the school will be a tremendous success in Bradford, which needs new schools. I look forward to laying that foundation stone as well.

Mr. Squire: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whether it is measured by the degree of parental interest or by the surge in support from industry—or even by the large number of teachers applying to teach in these schools—the CTC experiment will turn out to be an unqualified success? The Opposition must be careful lest they again find themselves saddled with opposing something that is both politically and educationally popular.

Mr. Baker: I am sure that in the months ahead we shall see a movement of opinion on the Opposition Benches towards favouring CTCs. Their conversion will be welcome, for CTCs will be very popular and very successful.

Extra-curricular Activities

4. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement concerning financial provision for extra-curricular activities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): The Education Reform Act responded to pressure to clarify the law on charging for school activities. Schools may not charge for provision offered during school hours, with the exception of individual music tuition. They may charge for extra-curricular activities provided outside school hours, as long as these are not an essential part of the curriculum. Local authorities and schools can still invite parents to make voluntary contributions towards the cost of any school activity, but the child's participation in the activity must not be dependent on the parents' willingness to contribute.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister not recognise that the new rules will effectively kill off the vast majority of school visits overseas, almost all of which take place in term time? Some 40,000 Leicestershire children have benefited from those important educational opportunities in the past few years, but they will no longer be able to do so. Will the Minister reconsider this wicked invasion of the rights of schools to provide extra-curricular activities which in their own way, as the Minister himself has said, are as valuable as much that goes on in the school term?

Mr. Butcher: I can only assume that the hon. and learned Gentleman has deliberately misunderstood the import of what is proposed. As he knows, it was in response to representations from local education authorities and under pressure from certain judicial decisions that we had to recodify this part of the law. Those who wish to enjoy trips abroad, for language purposes and so on, will still be able to do so——

Mr. Janner: If they can afford it.

Mr. Butcher: Parents will be asked for a contribution. Most parents who were willing to pay charges before are unlikely to refuse a voluntary contribution if they regard an activity as educationally worthwhile.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my hon. Friend aware that trips which are more localised than those referred to by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) are in great danger? In my education authority of Berkshire all school trips have been cancelled, which is causing great concern to parents and teachers. It seems that the code and regulations are the exact opposite of what the House and the Government wanted.

Mr. Butcher: The full circular will be issued in January. In response to representations from hon. Members, and particularly from my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), I have asked officials to ensure that it eliminates any ambiguities in the draft circular which may have caused concern to some local authorities. Some local authorities have been better than others at interpreting the draft circular to allow current practices to continue.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Can the Minister assure the House that the circular will not mark the beginning of a two-tier state education system—one for students with no parental support, whose parents cannot afford an increasing number of activities after school and during the holidays, and another in which an increasing range of activities will be paid for by parents with money, thus giving their children all the advantages that until now have been free and available for all?

Mr. Butcher: That is simply not correct. The kind of trips about which hon. Members are concerned have not necessarily been free in the past. We have been anxious to find a way to retain and codify the principle of free school education while still permitting flexibility for voluntary contributions to be made.

As for hardship, I do not see why the legislation should lead to increased pressure on school budgets. If activities are worthwhile, parents will surely still be willing to contribute to their cost, but LEAs and schools—this answers the hon. Gentleman's point—will have discretion as before to help in cases of hardship.

Smoking

5. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will include education about the dangers of smoking in the school curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Health education has been identified by the Government as an important cross-curricular theme to be covered by different foundation subjects within the national curriculum. As a result, different foundation subject working groups are being asked to cover appropriate aspects of health education within their recommendations. For example, the science working group recommends that all pupils should receive education within the science curriculum about the harmful effects of smoking. My right hon. Friend is now considering this, along with all the recommendations made by the council on science.

Mr. Amos: I am grateful for that positive reply. As 19 per cent. of fifth form boys and 30 per cent. of fifth form girls are regular smokers, will my hon. Friend have discussions to ensure that all staff set an example by not being allowed to smoke in public areas of their schools?

Mr. Butcher: As always, that will be a matter for the schools themselves. Most of them will observe the sort of practices that my hon. Friend wants. There have been improvements and reductions in the proportion of our youngsters who smoke, but we should not see that as the end of the story. Health education and personal and social education should make young people aware of the dangers of smoking.

Dr. Moonie: In view of the Minister's concern about the problem of smoking, will he ensure that the CTC in Teesside, which is sponsored by British American Tobacco, carries a Government health warning?

Mr. Butcher: I shall be charitable and interpret the hon. Gentleman's question as a serious one. I am sure that the parts of the curriculum which relate to health education in the maintained sector will still be relevant in that school.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend also take a serious look at the problem of smoking on school buses? Can he confirm that it is illegal for drivers of school buses and other public service vehicles to smoke on duty?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I shall draw the attention of the appropriate officials at the Department to that point to see whether the inspectorate should focus on it.

National Curriculum

6. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now in a position to publish the quantity and type of teachers required to teach the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department's memorandum to the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee on teacher supply includes some tentative estimates of teacher demand in national curriculum subjects. I have placed a copy in the Library.

Mr. Morley: We have already discussed the problem of science teachers, but there are also considerable teacher shortages in mathematics and mechanical subjects. Can the Minister assure the House that those shortages will be dealt with before the national curriculum comes into effect? Can he speculate whether denying teachers their civil right of pay negotiation and imposing on them pay settlements that are less than inflation do much for teacher recruitment?

Mr. Baker: On the latter point, we must await the report of the interim advisory committee. On the first point, on the estimates that I have made, we expect overall teacher supply and demand to be in balance in the 1990s. That, of course, reflects certain shortages in science, mathematics and technology, which I have acknowledged, and we must take steps to improve recruitment. We have a bursary scheme for students who wish to take teacher training in those subjects. As I said earlier, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), we want to attract people from other careers into teaching and to encourage teachers who have stopped teaching for some time to come back into teaching.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the quality of the teaching force is just as important as the quantity? Is he, therefore, satisfied that the teacher training colleges are producing graduates of the relevant quality and that the syllabuses that they are following have particular relevance to today's schools? Also, are the teachers capable of keeping control in the classroom?

Mr. Baker: We have improved the quality of teacher training considerably over the past three or four years, but I am the first to recognise that more needs to be done. It is clear that those going through teacher training need more experience in the classroom and less study of subjects such as the history of education. Certainly, trainee teachers should be trained in the techniques of controlling a class.

Mr. Straw: Does the Secretary of State not accept that something is seriously wrong when, on his own figures, three in 10 newly qualified teachers fail to go into teaching straight away and nearly four in 10 new teachers leave the profession within five years?

The Secretary of State has increased his own publicity budget by 2,900 per cent. since taking office. Why does he not devote the same attention to dealing with the central problem of schools—teacher shortages—as he does to the production of self-serving glossy pamphlets? Was the *Spectator* correct when it said recently that the Secretary of State is

"trading short term political advantage for the longer term interests of the education system"?

Mr. Baker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman reads the *Spectator*. That is a great improvement on what is usually read by Labour Members. We are now promoting the career of teaching very strongly as part of a departmental campaign. This year, 1,000 more people want to become teachers than last year and 3,000 more than two years ago. We have stopped the decline and we have recovered from the bad time of the teachers' strikes. We want to encourage more people who have been trained as teachers to come back into the teaching profession. About 50 per cent. of entrants into teaching each year are those who are returning. We must make it more attractive for people to return to the profession.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is strong support for the reform of the national curriculum and for the other measures in the Education Reform Act? Will he bear in mind the continuing shortage of highly qualified teachers of physics and mathematics, and will he do all that he can to ensure a better supply of well qualified pupils for university science and engineering departments?

Mr. Baker: I agree. There are bursaries of £1,300 per year for those who want to train as physics, mathematics or technology teachers. We want to attract people, perhaps in their 30s, to undertake a career switch from other careers to teaching, especially if they have a science or engineering background. Such people have much to bring to teaching, not only in knowledge but in maturity.

7. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the time available for the education of the age group eight to 11 years will be needed to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Decisions on timetabling the national curriculum will be for individual schools.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister aware that many eminent and expert educationists fear that the requirements of the national curriculum will occupy virtually the whole time available in primary schools? As British primary education is frequently effective and very often excellent, will the Minister reconsider the requirements to ensure that flexibility is not prohibited?

Mrs. Rumbold: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the report of the speech made recently by an HMI, who said that in primary schools, in particular, the core subjects would obviously take up the majority of the time—.

Mr. Hardy: All the time.

Mrs. Rumbold: No, he suggested that primary schools would need to examine closely the timetabling of mathematics and English and of the science parts of the core curriculum. That is perfectly true, but he went on to say that it would be possible, and most desirable, for primary schools to manage their affairs to include such matters as environmental and health education.

Mr. Alton: Given what the Secretary of State said about engineering and technology, is it not ironic that a group of primary school teachers whom I met yesterday in Liverpool had received yet another booklet from the DES, this time urging the teaching of classics to five to 11-year-olds? Does not the Minister have some sympathy with their complaint that the teaching of basic subjects such as arithmetic and reading to children—many of whom will otherwise leave school unable to read and write—must come first? Does she not agree that what we really need is more resources, particularly for remedial teaching?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is important that all children should leave school with the basics—the three Rs; every one of us would agree with that. Nevertheless, it is also important for other subjects, such as classics, to be highlighted by the HMI, as they were in an excellent publication, which I recommend the hon. Gentleman to read.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: When considering the primary phase of the national curriculum, will my hon. Friend confirm that despite recent study groups and newspaper reports, the national curriculum will reflect the manifest needs of primary school children to learn grammatical and structured English and arithmetical ability, as well as to use pocket computers? Will my hon. Friend also ensure that the assessment test at seven reflects that interest?

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already denounced as absolute rubbish the articles that appeared in the newspapers yesterday and over the weekend. The questions that were printed were examples taken from the existing work by the working group on mathematics, whose report was then submitted to the National Curriculum Council, which has done considerably more work since then. The School Examination and Assessment Council has just let the contract for the new assessment tests for the core subjects for the three different organisations to work on. I assure my hon. Friend that Ministers are expecting simple comprehensible tests in the core subjects to be used in the classroom in the future.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister not realise that he or she is completely underestimating the difficulties that will arise while the national curriculum is taking root? Are not large numbers of primary school teachers feeling the pressures at this moment? Teachers who are not properly equipped to teach science, for instance, are trying their best to teach it with inadequate resources. That is causing them deep worry, because they honestly want to do their best and they do not have the resources to carry out the preparation for the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: First, let me assure the hon. Gentleman that I am a she. The resources expected to be spent in the year 1989-90 include £130 million on the development of in-service training and other work associated with the national curriculum. I do not think that it is legitimate to suggest that teachers will not have sufficient resources. I fully understand that they will have to undertake in-service training and two extra days have been allocated especially for that work to take place this year.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful to advise parents not to do the homework of children aged between eight and 11, or the GCSE coursework of older children, in the interests of their children's learning and of sound results?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right to say that parents should not do their children's homework, but it is important that parents encourage their children to do homework and are ready to answer any questions that their children may ask.

Nursery Teachers

8. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any plans to increase the number of nursery teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Target places for primary initial teacher training will have increased by more than 60 per cent. between 1983 and 1989. Within their allocations, institutions have been asked to give greater emphasis to training for the early years, which includes nursery teaching.

Ms. Mowlam: Will the Minister assure the House that the training that will be offered to those additional teachers will qualify them fully in specific teaching for three to five-year-olds and will not be just general training? We wish to be sure that the specific needs of three to five-year-olds are taken into account in such training.

Mrs. Rumbold: Training for the early years, which is being undertaken by many teachers, will include the matters that the hon. Lady has mentioned.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the voluntary nursery sector? Will she ensure that, when promoting nursery education, local authorities do not undermine the voluntary sector, as the dogmatic Hertfordshire county council is doing at Wigginton and Grove Hill in my constituency?

Mrs. Rumbold: Uniquely in Britain we have a wide choice of pre-school education, which is extremely important and valuable to children and their parents. I agree with my hon. Friend that that choice should be maintained.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister recognise that there are grave shortages of nursery teachers in many areas? As the Secretary of State supported the Prime Minister when she pledged that 50 per cent. of three-year-olds and 90 per cent. of four-year-olds would have nursery places, will the Minister spell out the action that the Government will take to achieve that target?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Lady may be interested in the following figures. In 1980, shortly after this Government took office, 404,000 three to four-year-olds received pre-school education. That was 37·1 per cent. of the age group. In 1988, the figure rose to 505,000. More than 100,000 more three to four-year-olds are now in school.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that the person best equipped to teach a three to five-year-old is the mother?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right to say that the mother is one of the most important people in the child's early development. Children who do not have the benefit of mothers talking to and caring for them are unfortunate. It is most desirable that children also have the opportunity to attend play groups or nursery school.

Student Loans

9. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students"; and if he will make a statement.

17. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding his proposals for top-up loans for students.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Since the publication on 9 November of the Government's White Paper on top-up loans for students, about 3,600 representations have been received expressing a variety of views.

Mr. Wallace: Have any of those representations drawn to the Secretary of State's attention surveys which tend to show that the top-up loans scheme would deter from entering university people who are already under-represented—those in low-income brackets, disabled students, mature students and women? Has he also received representations from Scotland about the lack of reference in the White Paper to the special circumstances in Scotland, which has a four-year honours degree course? Is the Secretary of State satisfied that his proposals will not undermine that cornerstone of Scottish education?

Mr. Baker: Our proposals on top-up loans will not deter children from the lower, disadvantaged socio-economic groups from going into higher education. Where there are loan schemes in the rest of the world, and in Europe, in particular, not only do those countries spend less than we do on student support, but a much higher proportion of youngsters from lower socio-economic groups go into higher education. We have managed to combine the highest expenditure on higher education in Europe—compared with our gross national product—with the lowest uptake by youngsters. The loan scheme is an attempt to increase access, and I am sure that it will succeed.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Colin Shepherd.

Mr. Yeo: What about my question No. 17?

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Yeo, then.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that since graduates generally enjoy above-average incomes it is entirely fair that they should contribute directly to part of the cost of their higher education, especially as there will be protection for graduates on below-average incomes?

Mr. Baker: In annex D of the White Paper we calculate that the benefit to students from investing in higher education brings a return of about 25 per cent. Most graduates earn well above average earnings and virtually no new graduates are unemployed. If a new graduate is unemployed, it is by choice.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the most worrying aspects of the scheme is the effect that it will have on medical students? Will the Minister tell us whether there have been any representations from the banks or building societies about their willingness to run the scheme?

Mr. Baker: Since the publication of the White Paper, we have had constructive meetings with the banks, building societies and other financial institutions to consider the details of the scheme and to find out how best it can be administered. I hope that those meetings will lead to a fruitful conclusion.

Mr. Rhodes James: Will my right hon. Friend emphasise that the White Paper is only a consultation paper on which comments are invited by 1 February? Will he suggest to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that the House might be involved in that process and have a debate next month in Government time? With all Christmas benevolence, will my right hon. Friend follow the sage advice of Sir Winston Churchill on a similar occasion and take the paper upstairs and cut its dirty throat?

Mr. Baker: I said earlier that we had received 3,600 representations; we have now had 3,601. I am aware of my hon. Friend's views. I should be happy to have a debate, but I do not determine the timetable of the House. I am sure that my hon. Friend's recommendation will have been heard. We have had support from many parts of the education world, including the university town that my hon. Friend represents. Many people feel that it is right that students, who benefit enormously from higher education, should make some contribution towards their maintenance while at college.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the proposed loan scheme will cost the taxpayer more than £600 million by the end of the century without opening up access to higher education? Will he also confirm that to increase grants by the rate of inflation over the same period would cost less than one third of the cost of introducing the proposed top-up loan scheme? Why do the

Government intend to introduce a scheme which will push students further into debt, while not adding one extra student to higher education?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman confirms the point that I have always made. The proposal is not meant to cut the amount of money spent on higher education but to increase it. I do not believe that it will reduce access because it will provide many students with a certainty of income that they do not have now. Also, it will provide at least 50,000 students who do not qualify for grants access to top-up loans.

Teachers (Assessment)

10. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has for the assessment and appraisal of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Appraisal of teachers is currently being piloted in six local education authorities, with special funding through education support grant. We plan to make regulations in autumn next year requiring all LEAs to introduce appraisal for all their teachers over three or four years.

Mr. Bellingham: Does the Minister agree that, contrary to what is being put out by some of the teachers' unions, the key to the proposals is not to get rid of bad teachers but to help them? Is she aware that the overwhelming majority of Norfolk teachers to whom I have spoken broadly welcome the proposals because they see them as a crucial ingredient in raising education standards?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right. The local authorities already have proper dismissal procedures should they wish to follow them. Appraisal is a different animal. It is designed to assist teachers and to allow them to appraise their own activities within the classroom and rethink them if necessary.

Haberdashers' Aske's Schools

11. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has regarding the establishment of a city technology college on the site of the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham boys and girl schools in Deptford.

Mr. Butcher: None, but the governors have sought technical advice from my officials on matters relating to various options for the schools' future. I understand that they are currently consulting parents about these options.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister not agree, however, that the consultation process that was concluded last week was unfair, in that it promoted the CTC option at the expense of all others at a time when Lewisham council is still in the process of working out its own education policies, as required by the Department? Will he support the parents who are asking for an extension of the consultation period?

Mr. Butcher: The consultation process is a matter for the Government and the parents. We are prepared to trust parents to exercise their democratic rights. It is entirely a matter for the parents as a whole to come to a decision, which we will then consider.

Mr. John Hunt: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have served as a member of this governing body for more than 30 years and that at a meeting of the inner London education authority this very afternoon it is threatening to remove me and the only other Conservative governor simply because we had the temerity to support the CTC proposal? Will my hon. Friend please condemn this attempt at intimidation and recognise that it is an attempt to brainwash and gerrymander the governing body?

Mr. Butcher: I hope that Opposition Members will also condemn some of the things that have been happening at ILEA's behest, apart from the proposed sacking of my hon. Friend from the governing body. As I said earlier, we trust the democratically arrived at views of the parents. They can come to their own conclusion about the treatment meted out to my hon. Friend.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not entirely unacceptable to public opinion that a convicted criminal—a known associate of criminals—should have had his shotgun licence given back to him by the judicial authorities? Bearing in mind the tragic events that took place yesterday in Coventry—I pay full tribute to the bravery of the police officers involved—is it not absolutely essential that the controls on shotguns should be far tighter than is provided for in the pending legislation?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, he will know that that is a decision of the courts, taken under the Firearms Act 1968. The new Act, the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, contains much tougher controls, but it does not come into force until next year.

As for the hon. Gentleman's point about Coventry, I am sure that we all wish quietly to thank the police for their bravery and courage in the face of great danger and for the way in which they constantly strive and succeed in protecting the citizens of this country.

Mr. Batiste: What advice would my right hon. Friend offer to those who will be under pressure tonight to vote against increases in pensions and social security payments?

The Prime Minister: I would offer them this advice: during the lifetime of this Government, expenditure on social security has gone up from £17 billion to £50 billion. That is a remarkable record. We have also tried to target help on those who need it most. If that remarkable record of economic growth and increased help to social security claimants is to continue, I hope that we shall get as much support as possible this evening.

Q2. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKay: As private nursing homes and private homes for the aged are rate-free at the discretion of the local authority, as 95 per cent. of the people who live in those homes receive social security payments and as the homes are inspected twice a year, should not the books also be inspected by the Department of Social Security, since it provides the largest share of the money?

The Prime Minister: That would be taking on a very considerable obligation which I do not think is necessary. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has very much faith in the integrity of those homes. If he has any complaint against any particular home, perhaps he will let the appropriate authority know the facts instead of condemning them all.

Mr. Gale: Further to her earlier answer, will my right hon. Friend find time to discuss with our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the need to introduce legislation to prohibit entirely the issuing of firearms licences to convicted criminals?

The Prime Minister: It would be best to get the Act that we passed in the previous Session fully into operation first, as it tightens the criteria for the issue of a shotgun certificate. The police will be able to refuse the licence if the applicant does not have a good reason to have a shotgun and they will have to be satisfied that the applicant will not be a danger to public safety. Shotgun owners will be required to keep their shotguns securely to minimise the risk of theft, and all shotguns will have to be registered separately on the certificate. That is a very considerable advance on the present legislation and we should bring it into operation first.

Mr. Kinnock: Following that reply, I am bound to ask: why not let the police be the total decision-makers? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Kinnock.

Mr. Kinnock: Why does the Prime Minister think that in the six months after April this year, rent arrears in Tory Sutton increased by 40 per cent., in Tory Barnet by 43 per cent. and in Tory Enfield by 63 per cent.?

The Prime Minister: The increases in rent arrears are a matter for concern, but the Department of the Environment and the Audit Commission have stressed the need for better control by local authorities. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned some local authorities, but nearly 50 per cent. of the increased rent arrears are concentrated in just 20 Labour authorities.

Mr. Kinnock: The reports of very great increases in rent arrears come from authorities under every form of political control—Labour, Tory and hung. Is not the huge increase in arrears a direct consequence of the £650 million cut in housing benefits which took place this year? Does the Prime Minister understand that it will get even worse next year when transitional protection runs out and when rents inevitably increase as a consequence of interest rate rises? Will the Prime Minister now reverse the housing benefit cuts or does she want mass evictions in Britain?

The Prime Minister: No. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that housing benefit still applies to one in three households. That means that every two households contribute towards keeping a third household. I assume that he is well aware that the total cost of housing benefit in 1988-89 is only 2 per cent. lower than in the previous year. That cannot explain a 40 per cent. increase in rent arrears. Local authorities must get round and collect the rent arrears. Those who cannot afford to pay rent still have their rent paid through housing benefit.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is deliberately evading the fact that she has withdrawn resources from local authorities and she has robbed some of the poorest families in the country by taking away housing benefit. She, who lives in rent-free accommodation, should not lecture others on the subject.

The Prime Minister: As I said, the poorest have their housing paid for—*[Interruption.]* The poorest have their rents met 100 per cent. and their rates met to 80 per cent. together with an average payment to meet the rest of the rates. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that nearly half the rent arrears are concentrated in 20 Labour authorities, that the Audit Commission stressed the need for better control by local authorities and that most of the rent arrears arise because there are insufficient regular collections of rent.

Q3. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marland: It is reported in today's newspapers that 77 countries have come to the aid of the Armenian earthquake victims. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the largest cash contributions have come from individual citizens of this country? Does not that underline what a generous and warm-hearted society we have, and will she refute Opposition Members' allegations that we have become selfish and greedy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the response of this country has been extremely generous, both publicly and privately. There have been 10 flights to the Soviet Union specifically for relief in Armenia, and some of the people who went there, whom we congratulate on their valiant efforts, have returned and told us of the true extent of the devastation. The rescue phase is nearly over and reconstruction will follow, with which obviously we will be willing to help. We thank all those volunteers who offered their good services and raised money. I should like to say that we also thank very much the Soviet ambassador to this country, who has made every effort to see that our help gets to where it is most needed. I should have thought that Opposition Members would also want us to do that.

Q4. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Battle: Will the Prime Minister assure the House that none of Britain's 3,500 hostels, many of which are specifically for homeless people, will be closed as a result of benefit changes? Or will she tell 50,000 homeless young people who will sleep out in the streets of Britain this Christmas that there will be no room at the hostel?

The Prime Minister: No. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there is still room in London, for example not only at Centrepoint but at hostels which are specially run for those people. There are special arrangements for paying amounts from social security at Centrepoint, but not at others because there never have been. There are still places available at those hostels.

Mr. Quentin Davies: In contemplating another year of gratifying economic expansion, will my right hon. Friend agree that a most important feature of the encouraging confidence that exists is the unprecedented rate of new business start-ups?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it has been an economically very successful year; unemployment has fallen and the number of jobs has increased. New businesses are starting at the rate of 1,000 a week. Thank goodness we do not have a Socialist Government.

Q5. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grant: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Commission for Racial Equality is unable to prosecute all bona fide cases of racial discrimination because of a lack of funding from her Government? As a result, black and ethnic minority people are denied their legal rights of protection from racial discrimination. Does she agree that this is disgraceful, and will she confirm that her Government support the prosecution of racists under the Race Relations Act 1976? Will she confirm that she will provide enough funds for the commission to do its job?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that prosecution is a matter not for me but the Crown prosecuting authorities. Spending on legal aid has risen more rapidly than most other expenditure in this country.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Will my right hon. Friend consider setting up a constitutional conference on electoral reform, or does she share my view that those who are now advocating proportional representation merely illustrate their perceived inability to be elected?

The Prime Minister: I will not set up such a conference. Governments who are elected by that means tend to be weak and cannot take decisions, and there are too many of those already.

Q6. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Prime Minister realise that cuts in housing benefit have sent large numbers of old people to citizens advice bureaux? Due to the operation of the community programme, the activities of such bureaux, especially in my area, have been cut. They do not have enough people to service the needs of old people, many of whom are breaking down in front of the staff of citizens advice bureaux. Will she kindly do something, or will she be seen to be Scrooge, without the last redeeming chapter?

The Prime Minister: No. In 1979, housing benefit cost £1·5 billion. We now spend £5 billion. About 6 million households have housing benefit. *[Interruption.]* I never know whether Opposition Members will say that the country is so rich that it is spending too much on consumer goods or will complain that no one has any money.

Sir John Stokes: In view of the difficulties that appear to have arisen between the West German Government and British forces in Germany, will my right hon. Friend confirm that our forces are in Germany to defend our NATO allies, the West, and, of course, Germany? We look to the German Government to behave in a more friendly fashion as an old ally.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. Our presence in Germany is to defend the Federal Republic, our allies and ourselves. He is aware that several people were killed in the Remscheid accident. The Federal German Government asked all armed forces stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany not to hold any social events or to play music until after the funerals of those killed in the accident. When the host country asked for that for a short period, it seemed reasonable to try to conform with its wishes. We did so.

Mr. Faulds: The Americans did not.

The Prime Minister: Never mind. We did so. That was right. Instructions to comply with that request until after the memorial service on Thursday 15 December were issued to British forces. We accorded the highest sensitivity to those who suffered as a result of that grievous accident.

Chieftain Tank (Replacement)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the replacement of the Chieftain tank.

Chieftain entered service with the British Army in 1965. Although it continues to give excellent service, it is now rather advanced in years, and technology in this field has moved ahead. It has proved impracticable to organise an international collaborative tank project in an early time scale. Allied collaboration in tanks and their armament remains an important objective for the future; but I have concluded that Chieftain must be replaced as soon as practicable by a tank developed nationally by this country or an ally. I have also decided, subject to satisfactory contractual terms, to upgrade the armament of the Challenger 1 tanks now in service by fitting them with an improved gun, known as CHARM.

My Department has accordingly conducted an assessment of the available tank options. The three main contenders are an improved version of the Leopard 2, manufactured by Kraus Maffei of Germany; an improved version of the Abrams M1, manufactured by General Dynamics of the United States; and the Challenger 2 Mk 2 proposed by Vickers Defence Systems, which is an improved version of Challenger 1. Our assessment was complicated by the fact that the three tanks are not all at the same stage of development.

All three contenders have the potential to meet the Army's requirement. Our assessment took account not only of that factor but of technical merit, risk, time scale, cost, reliability, stretch potential, interoperability with allies, logistic implications and the prospects for overseas sales.

The size of the investment in a new tank makes it essential to conform to sound procurement practice and to minimise risk. After the most careful consideration, therefore, I have decided to give Vickers Defence Systems an opportunity to demonstrate that it is able to deliver Challenger 2 Mk 2 to specification, to time and to cost. Subject to the agreement of satisfactory contract terms, my Department will fund the company to undertake a demonstration phase which will last until the end of September 1990. This will require it to demonstrate within the contracted time that Challenger 2 Mk 2 can meet the staff requirement and can be successfully developed and produced to the required standard so as to achieve the required in-service date, and at a price which the company has already offered us. Precise criteria for performance and technical achievement have been established against which the success of the demonstration phase will be measured. I have set these out today in a written answer to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway). An important task for the company will be to demonstrate that an improved ammunition round for the tank's main gun, which we believe will be necessary to match the technical developments of the future, can be successfully developed to the standard and in the time scale required. Intermediate milestones have been established within the demonstration phase at which the company will have to demonstrate satisfactory progress. This staged approach will enable us to keep our options open for the future, if that proves necessary.

My decision to take the first steps towards replacing Chieftain is an important one for the Army and the NATO Alliance. Over the next 21 months Vickers Defence Systems will have an excellent opportunity to prove its ability to develop a successful tank. I commend my decision to the House.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): We welcome the announcement that Vickers Defence Systems will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that Challenger 2 Mk 2 can meet staff requirements. Last week, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and I visited Leeds, we were confident that those requirements would be met. We all know that this has been a lengthy process and it is vital that a proper decision should be made. Therefore, I should like to ask the Secretary of State to confirm that the suggested procedure is acceptable to Vickers, that it should not be construed outside the House as a grudging or conditional approval of its tank, and that such a procedure would have had to have been adopted, regardless of which tank had been chosen.

Will the Secretary of State further confirm that the fire control system is only one part of the tank's performance and that the much quoted Canadian gunnery competition has always been recognised as a limited test of any tank's capabilities? Would he consider the replacement of the whole fire control system as well as the gun for Challenger 1 in order to improve its accuracy? Does he accept that we are delighted that our faith in British technology and the work people in the many plants throughout the United Kingdom has been vindicated by this welcome announcement?

Mr. Younger: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his warm welcome and that of his hon. Friends for this decision. I spoke to the managing director of Vickers this morning and I can confirm that this is acceptable to the company. This is in no sense a grudging acceptance. There is no doubt that if the Challenger 2 Mk 2 comes up to all the specifications, which the company is confident it will, it will be an excellent tank.

The work to consider a replacement fire control system for Chieftain started before the Canadian gunnery competition, but when we replace the Challenger 1 guns we shall make all possible improvements.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): Will my right hon. Friend accept the warm support of all of us on this side of the House for his decision which, among other things, maintains the defence capability in this important weapon system, which will enable us to play a continuing role in the next generation of tank production? Will my right hon. Friend also take credit for the fact that his procurement system has now imposed a rigorous competitive discipline on such contracts, not the least benefit of which is that his Department can claim that Britain is the second largest exporter of defence equipment in the world?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend not only for what he has said today, but for the large amount of work that he did to bring about the competitive system, which is undoubtedly doing much good for the British defence industry.

I am grateful, too, for what my right hon. Friend said about the capability of the tank. There is no doubt that this is largely to do with the fact that it has had to be developed so far competitively and that this will continue in the future. As I have said in my statement, those options will remain open to us to ensure that what we get will be up to standard while we have the options open to make the choices.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Will the Secretary of State accept that his announcement is warmly welcomed by my party, too, especially that part of his proposals which refers to a demonstration phase? Does he agree that what he has effectively done is to put Vickers on probation? It has enjoyed considerable support from both sides of the House in the run-up to the decision, but it must now justify that support by producing a tank on time and up to specification, and one which will meet the demands of the British Army.

Mr. Younger: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his welcome. I do not think that I would use the phrase "on probation". This is giving Vickers, a company in this country, the opportunity to prove that this tank is as good as it is sure it is. I believe that is fair.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): While welcoming the decision of my right hon. Friend and the Cabinet most warmly, I ask him to give a categoric assurance that, this decision having been taken, no one in the Ministry of Defence or in the Army will be allowed to interfere with Vickers while it is carrying out this project, either by making proposals for amendments to specifications or by interfering in any other way. We have seen for decades now the consequences of continual amendment. If my right hon. Friend will now strongly say that no one will be allowed to interfere until the end of the marked period, he will do the country a great service.

Mr. Younger: I fully appreciate my right hon. Friend's point. There will be careful specification with Vickers of exactly what it is that it is expected to produce on time —by September 1990. I believe that that meets precisely my right hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I commend the decision of the Secretary of State to delay the final decision that we thought would be made a few weeks ago. It has been by far the best way to proceed. However, in the city of Leeds, getting the order matters a great deal. Armoured regiments were raised in the city for the last war, and they fought bravely. They do not want any old tank; they want the best tank that can be produced. How can the work force in Leeds play a part in this demonstration period so that it knows what is lacking and what has to be done? It will not all be done behind closed doors.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome, and I take the point that he has made. What the work force must do—which I am sure it will do with the greatest enthusiasm—is to ensure that the work it carries out during the next 21 months produces exactly the yardsticks and the standards laid down in the contract. If it does that, it will have proved that this is the tank that we should choose. We are keeping our options open so that we have a choice to make at all stages, but it is up to the work force to prove that it can do it.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his commendably judicious decision. Will he tell us a little more about the steps that he proposes to ensure that in the end we get the best tank at the best price? Will he also give an estimate of the total cost?

Mr. Younger: The items which are spelled out in the reply to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) which I am answering today come under 11 headings. Specific yardsticks have been discussed and it will be agreed with the company what it has to achieve. That appears to be a clear brief for the company and its work force of what is required during the next 21 months. We expect the cost to the Government of this demonstration phase to be about £90 million.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the Secretary of State aware that Vickers will respond to this limited contract and qualify for bulk production? Will he impress on the Vickers management, not the workers at the Leeds plant—as my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) have conveyed, the workers are determined to succeed—that the competition is tight and, consequently, the requirements severe in respect not only of the gun and the general fire control system but of all-round performance, unit costs and availability? The House is unlikely to accept another Nimrod—AWACS disappointment.

Mr. Younger: I very much agree with hon. Gentleman. I think that I also agree that the competitive element will spur everyone to the greatest efforts. We must provide the best tanks we can for the British forces. The choice of ordering this tank in bulk will be made when we are totally convinced that we have the best tank available.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the decision to place this order with Vickers will be widely welcomed, with one vital proviso? My right hon. Friend must be able to say that, in view of past shortcomings of British tanks, this tank will be the best available weapon for the British Army. That is crucial in this decision.

Mr. Younger: I take my right hon. Friend's point absolutely, but will just correct him. I do not think that he meant to imply that this is an order for the tank. It is an order for the demonstration phase. We intend to carry the demonstration phase through until it is demonstrated that this is the tank which is up to the specifications. Until that point, we retain the option of choosing the best tank. That is the best guarantee that the product that we get will be the best.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's announcement. Will he confirm that Challenger 2 potentially has a number of important advantages over its United States rival? Will he confirm, for example, that it will have better armour, will be more manoeuvrable in combat, will have lower fuel consumption and will be cheaper to operate and maintain? Are those not important considerations which will lead him to buy British?

Mr. Younger: They are important considerations, but I should say that we are not dealing with three tanks one of

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which is outstandingly better than the others. They are all good tanks. They all have good points and less good points. I have had to make a delicate judgment on where the balance lies. My decision is that, if Challenger 2 Mk 2 can be brought fully up to the standard to which it is reputed it can be brought, it will be a very good tank.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): What estimates has my right hon. Friend's Department made of the total cost of the order were it eventually to go for this tank? I welcome the modern version of a last world war weapon, but when will my right hon. Friend tell the House that he will buy a next world war weapon, a helicopter?

Mr. Younger: The cost of a full order would very much depend on its size and scale and whether the goods were ordered in one or two tranches. If a full order were placed to replace all the Chieftains on a one-for-one basis, it would come to well over £1 billion worth of tanks.

Many studies have been made into the relative merits of tanks and helicopters to fulfil their slightly differing roles on the battlefield. It is clear that both have a role. We require a balance of both types of equipment.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Is the Secretary of State aware that this news will be welcome to my constituents in Tyne Bridge, especially the work force at the Vickers factory on the Scotswood road in Newcastle? The decision comes after considerable lobbying by the work force and the company and by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. Why does a company with a century of experience and a work force with considerable skills—built up without the aid of city technology colleges and the like—have to prove itself to a Government who have so much egg on their face?

Mr. Younger: I welcome the first part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, but the last half was not truly worthy of the occasion. As I understand it, the management and the work force at Vickers Defence Systems are convinced that they have a first class tank to offer. It is for that reason, and not because of any lobbying, that I have chosen to give them the chance to prove it.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the excellent engine that I hope will power this model uses half the fuel of the American option and is made by the work force at Perkins Engines in Shrewsbury? Therefore, my right hon. Friend's statement today is logistically welcome. Have not the extra Challenger regiment and the new main battle tanks only been made possible as a result of the Government's management of the economy and my right hon. Friend's stewardship of the Ministry of Defence? If this afternoon's statement were being made by a Labour defence spokesman, the workers in Newcastle, Leeds and elsewhere, including in Shrewsbury in my constituency, would not be seeing this main battle tank because under the Labour party's chaos economy and cuts in defence policy it would never be able to afford it.

Mr. Younger: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend and I am glad to be reminded again of his interest in the engines, which I am sure will be produced well. My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. We are now spending from the defence budget about £19 billion more in real terms on conventional weapons than the Labour party was when it was in government. In no way could an expenditure of this sort have been fitted into the sort of defence budget that the Opposition have been talking about.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Will the funding and specifications to which the Secretary of State referred make any provision for the new tank to be built with British steel rather than with steel from a foreign company which may well be subject to well-concealed subsidies? In other words, will he and the Vickers management bear in mind that accepting the lowest tender, which could easily be illegally subsidised, will not necessarily be in the British national interest?

Mr. Younger: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but which steel supplier to use is very much a matter for Vickers.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): That this is a sensible decision will be recognised by people in Leeds and, I am sure, by all Conservative Members who know the substantial investment put by Vickers, since it bought the Royal Ordnance factory, behind the Challenger tank. We are delighted that my right hon. Friend has faith in Vickers' management and work force and in their ability to demonstrate that they can produce the best for the British Army. However, in the light of the tank's enormous export potential, will he dispel the innuendo deriving from *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday that the Ministry of Defence, and the Army in particular, are not completely behind the decision?

Mr. Younger: I thank my hon. Friend very much for what he has said. I agree that Vickers' investment in its two tank factories is a remarkable demonstration of confidence in its ability to produce something and sell it, and we are now giving it a further opportunity to demonstrate that. I can dispel the story that has been mentioned. The entire Ministry of Defence will be extremely pleased at the progress made on the tank issue and is completely united behind it.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Vickers' work force and management in Leeds will be working flat out to ensure that they meet the targets that have been set by the Ministry of Defence, and I have absolute confidence that they will do that. But the work force and, I suspect, the management have one fear, which goes back to the point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), and that is about the Ministry of Defence's motivation. I heard what the Secretary of State has just said, but will he confirm that in Cabinet discussions he has not put forward any recommendations in favour of the Challenger 2 tank?

Mr. Younger: No, I could not reveal any aspect of any kind about the internal goings-on of Cabinet discussions. That would be quite improper and unusual. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Ministry of Defence will be completely behind the decision and will ensure that it is successful.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for all that he said about the work force. Like those well used to competition, it will appreciate that it has been given a clear series of targets which it will have to hit full and proper if we are to proceed with the remaining stages of ordering the tanks.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is my right hon. Friend aware that this opportunity for British industry to prove itself is the best possible Christmas present for those who work at David Brown Gears in my constituency and who, we hope, will produce the gear box for Challenger 2? They and, no doubt, those employed at Vickers will be happy to prove that they can build the best tank in the world, and I am sure that they would wish to thank my right hon. Friend for putting his confidence in British industry.

Mr. Younger: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right and that all concerned will do their best to meet the yardsticks drawn up in agreement with the company. It is our right to set such yardsticks and to give the company the opportunity. We are sure that it will meet the targets; if it does, we shall be able to proceed.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Does the Secretary of State accept that many of my constituents who work at Vickers in Scotswood, together with many more in the ammunition division in Birtley, will welcome today's announcement? Does he also accept the disquiet felt by some of us about the extremely odd procurement process that has been involved, and in particular about the serious misinformation campaign carried out by various people against the Vickers tank?

Mr. Younger: I agree that some peculiar information has been put about from I do not know where for some months past. I assure the hon. Gentleman that none of it has emanated from my Ministry, which has proceeded along a very careful path. We want to ensure, first, that we obtain the best possible tank for the Army and, secondly, that in obtaining it we also obtain the best possible value for money. I believe that we should proceed stage by stage. Everyone is being given a challenge: if they produce the goods we shall buy them, and if they do not we shall have to look elsewhere.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that it is gratifying to find such approbation for his decision on both sides of the House. Will he confirm, first, that the Army will get the best available tank in the shortest possible time, and, secondly, that he will concentrate a little more on the likely export potential?

Mr. Younger: Provided that Vickers and its work force reach the targets in time and that all our other yardsticks such as costs are met, we shall obtain the best possible tank for the British Army. But if that were regrettably not to happen, we should have the option to go elsewhere if necessary. It is of course desirable to get on with the project within the time scale that has been laid down, and that will be very much part of the competition.

As for exports, I have already assured the company that my Ministry will give it the maximum support wherever we can in the world so that the tank and all its derivatives can be sold in a way that is suitable for each country.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State tell us more about the nature of the funding? We are told that the Government are putting in £90 million. How much is the company doing to match that within the time scale?

Secondly, how many prototypes will be built? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could also tell us something about the purchasing of long-lead items. If we are to have a main battle tank of this calibre by the mid-1990s, these are important considerations. I hope that I shall receive a frank reply.

Mr. Younger: Yes, they are important considerations. It is fair to say that Vickers has already spent quite a bit of its own money on developing the tank, but the stage that I have announced today will be entirely funded by the Government, who will spend approximately £90 million. The company has already put in some money, and it will be following that up with a good many other commitments.

The hon. Gentleman asked about prototypes. It is a question less of prototype tanks than of various types of demonstration that would be necessary, some on the work bench rather than on the tanks.

Finally, as far as long-lead items are concerned, we shall still have time to make our final decision in the light of this demonstration phase on or after September 1990, and still have time for the long-lead items to be ordered in time for delivery at the in-service date.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend said that this stage will be funded by the Government. He will know better than most that nothing is more difficult to predict than the cost of high technology prototypes of almost any sort of weaponry. What will happen if, at the end of this stage, Vickers says it has spent the £90 million but that it does not have a tank? Will he return to the House for further funds?

Mr. Younger: I should have to come back to the House with a further statement if that happened. My hon. Friend has drawn attention to a most important feature. In line with the best procurement practice, we have secured a fixed price from the company for this demonstration phase. It is understood by everyone, not least the company, that if it could not complete this phase to standard or on time we should have the option of going elsewhere if we needed to.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): In order to procure the best tank to match the best tank crews, is my right hon. Friend prepared to look at the negotiation of international licensing agreements to ensure that the best international technology will be available for this tank?

Mr. Younger: Various sophisticated parts of technology go into the tank, some of them international. Vickers already has numerous international contacts of the type that my hon. Friend suggests.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in addition to this welcome announcement, he has given a vote of confidence to the privatisation of the Royal Ordnance factories? Vickers can put much investment into this project—successfully, I hope—and it can raise funds should there be difficulties en route.

Will the final decision be taken in 1990, or will there be an appraisal earlier than that to allow this long-term uncertainty to be removed from the company, whose work force are highly skilled—they number many of my constituents among them—and whose management wishes to prove itself effective?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right in intimating that this shows that Royal Ordnance, which is an important part of producing this tank, is an effective and

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well-managed company under its new private enterprise management. That gives the lie to some of the most extreme statements made at the time of its privatisation. It is clearly healthy and in good order.

As for the time scale, I do not think it likely that these milestones will all be passed before September 1990, although the company is confident of doing so well within that time. Twenty-one months is not a long time to demonstrate all this about an important high technology tank.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, unlike the Sting Ray torpedo and AWACS, this is not a blueprint for a new system, but a development of existing technology which Vickers is perfectly capable of producing? Will he confirm, therefore, that he has every confidence in Vickers being able to match this demanding schedule?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right about that. This is not the same type of technical challenge as the other cases that he instanced. On the other hand, there is quite a lot of high technology in a modern tank. It is important that Vickers has the experience, and that the type of contract we are proposing to lay on the company gives it a strong incentive to deliver on time, to cost and to standard. That is written into the contract and it is our safeguard against this being another example of some unhappy experiences.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, which will be welcomed by my constituents living in Lymington and Ringwood who work for Wellworthy, which is a major supplier to the tank fleet. I hope that it will be able to continue to be so in future.

In view of the rather unhappy background and the knocking of the British tank in the press and elsewhere, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Abrams tank has proved itself far from trouble-free, and that when it was used by the Pakistan armed forces its turret was prone to splitting due to bad workmanship?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. I have seen reports of the performances of various of the tanks that have been in this competition. I would not want to select one instance reported in the paper as being typical. I have no doubt that all three tanks I mentioned in my statement are first class. It is a question of trying to get the best one for the British Army.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the two early-day motions tabled by Conservative Members, which each attracted more than 100 signatures, specifically avoided the sort of jingoistic sentiment we have heard from some Opposition quarters in the past few weeks. They paid tribute to the relative merits of the Vickers' tank as against those if its potential competitors.

In view of the substantial potential export orders, whose value could amount to up to £12 billion, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to state categorically that this decision was based not on political grounds but on the merits of the tank, and particularly on the fact that Vickers has a proven hull in the shape of the Challenger 1 hull, and a proven fire control system bought in from outside?

Mr. Younger: I, too, have watched with interest the war of the early-day motions on this subject. I am sure that they will be helpful in focusing people's attention on it.

I can certainly confirm what my hon. Friend has said. In a matter of this sort we must be quite clear that our objective of buying the best tank for the British Army depends on assessing the merits of the various tanks presented to us. It is on the basis of that that we have decided to give Vickers the chance to develop the Challenger Mk 2 further.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): In permitting Vickers to demonstrate that it can produce the best tank for the British Army, my right hon. Friend has made the right decision for the right reasons. Will he confirm that the Challenger 2 Mk 2 is likely to have lower through-life costs and lower support costs and will be better protected than the Abrams tank; that it will have greater compatibility and interoperability with existing British weapons systems; and that it is likely to have considerable export potential if we decide to go ahead with production?

Mr. Younger: Those are certainly some of the merits that we carefully took into account when making this decision. It is fair to make the general point that there is not much to choose between the three tanks as regards final through-life costs. We made the balance of the decision on technical merit and other grounds.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be pleasure in the north of the country, particularly on Tyneside and in Yorkshire, at his decision? Does he accept that the funding of a British tank for the future is essential and that it would be a great mistake if this country were ever to cease producing its own main battle tank? Will he give maximum support to Vickers' export orders, bearing in mind that the maintenance of a tank-building capacity in this country requires us continually to export tanks to other parts of the world?

Mr. Younger: Yes, we shall certainly give the fullest support to Vickers in seeking export markets for the various derivatives of the Challenger which will now be on offer. I would not go quite as far as my hon. Friend and guarantee that for all time it is essential that we always make all our own tanks. I hope that that will be so, and while we have a good tank industry let us give it the chance to prove what it can do.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am thoroughly pleased with his decision, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that his officials will monitor the development of the final stage of the Challenger 2? Can the cost be offset by a commission from sales of tanks to countries overseas when a tank has been proved successful?

Mr. Younger: The monitoring process will be close and specific. The company will have to achieve specific milestones. Together with the company we shall watch progress carefully.

It will be very much up to the company to take the lead in exporting, and it will have the fullest support from the defence exports services organisation.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As by the time the main order—if it comes—is due for execution many people believe that the tank will be shown to have the antediluvian tactical significance of a brontosaurus confronted with a Smart missile, will my right hon. Friend hasten slowly so that when we come to spend the real money, it is spent on a modern defence system rather than on fighting—as we always do—the last war yet again?

Mr. Younger: When the tank is developed, it will certainly be a far more formidable machine than any seen in the last war. As I have said already, we appreciate that there are various merits for tanks and other forms of equipment, such as helicopters, but we cannot envisage a situation in which either of them will be unnecessary.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on insisting on examining carefully what we are buying under the £90 million contract before placing the main contract. Can he assure us that part of that assessment will include user trials by some of the troops who will use the equipment eventually so that we can be certain that this is the best tank and does not merely fulfil the paper criteria?

Mr. Younger: Representatives of the Army and those who will use the tank will be involved closely in that process. I doubt whether the tank will be developed sufficiently during this phase for troops in front line units to try it out, but the Army will be closely involved in the process.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): My right hon. Friend will know that his decision will be welcomed by many in the Royal Armoured Corps based at Bovington and Lulworth in my constituency. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Challenger's fire control system is designed to hit moving targets, whereas the Abrams tank is good at hitting static targets? The tactics of the Russians would be to move while we were firing at them. We already have the best tank and today's decision will ensure that the Mk 2 is even better.

Mr. Younger: I confirm that I have been made aware that the Royal Armoured Corps will be extremely pleased by the promise of a new tank to replace the Chieftain. On the fire control system, I make no comment on the capability of the Abrams tank, but if the Challenger Mk 2 comes up to the specification that the company has given, it will be effective.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): In view of the history of moving the goalposts in the development stages of new weapons, particularly with Foxhunter radar, which has led to the present calamities, will the Secretary of State confirm that staff requirements for the Challenger 2 will not be changed during the development stage?

Mr. Younger: Yes, staff requirements, which the company is striving to meet, are clearly understood and they are fixed. However, the yardsticks in the demonstration phase, which the company is now being given the opportunity to meet, are also clear and specific and have been agreed with the company. It will have to meet those yardsticks if it is to obtain the final order. We shall keep our options open until then.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

Steven John Norris Esq., for Epping Forest.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1988.
2. City of Glasgow District Council Order Confirmation Act 1988.
3. Newcastle upon Tyne Town Moor Act 1988.
4. Birmingham City Council Act 1988.
5. Southern Water Authority Act 1988.
6. Harwich Harbour Act 1988.

Points of Order

4.16 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask for your guidance on certain contentious matters concerning the future of the Scottish Affairs Committee and the impact of the Government's motion which is to be debated later tonight. I have no wish to tackle the merits of the proposal. The Opposition, as you know, Mr. Speaker, believe it to be a shabby and unsatisfactory affair, but what disconcerts and concerns me is that the motion in the name of the Leader of the House seems to be drafted badly and is unspecific in its intent. It notes:

"the inability of the Committee of Selection to nominate Members to serve",

but draws no apparent conclusion from that. The rest of the motion dealing with the supposed role of the Committee of Public Accounts and other Select Committees is mere decoration. The kernel of the motion is:

"That this House recognises the inability of the Committee of Selection to nominate Members to serve on the Scottish Affairs Committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 104(2);".

I am entitled to say, seriously, so what? The motion lacks specificity and seems to be ambiguous. I genuinely do not know what the effect would be if it were to be passed and I ask for your help in defining the impact of the motion on the machinery of the House, if it were to be passed.

As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, it must be seen against the background of the terms of Standing Order No. 130, which deals with the setting up of Select Committees on departmental business and states that those Committees shall be appointed, and Standing Order No. 130(2), which lists the Scottish Affairs Committee as one that is to be set up. It says that such a Committee should have a membership of 13 and a quorum of five. As I understand it, the motion in the name of the Leader of the House does not seek to alter that. It appears, therefore, that the Committee will continue to exist in a state of limbo or suspended animation. Can the Committee be brought to life at any time? If so, what is the machinery for doing that? Standing Order No. 130 has a mandatory tone, stating that Committees "shall be appointed". That must be balanced against the executive role given to the Committee of Selection in Standing Order No. 104(2). Is the Committee of Selection affected by the passing of the motion and is it to take the instructions of the House from it, because it is not specific? Is it to cease its efforts to form such a Committee, given the terms of Standing Order No. 130? What message is there for the Committee if the motion is passed? I believe that there is no specific message.

I shall draw a parallel with an example from another discipline. If, as a solicitor, I presented this motion in my local sheriff court, the bench would give me a rough passage and would want to know what I was inviting it to do and what the motion meant. The House is in genuine difficulty. Therefore, can you, Mr. Speaker, answer my questions and clarify the situation?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with the matter. I thank the hon. Gentleman for having given notice of the matter, because I have been able to look into it in some detail. The motion on the Order Paper is in order, but I can confirm that if it is passed later tonight it will not prevent the Committee of Selection from coming forward with names for the Scottish Affairs Committee if it subsequently found itself able to do so.

Mr. Dewar: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be fair to make the interpretation that there is no instruction that it is not to continue its search for that membership?

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Rumours are spreading through the building that my Member of Parliament—the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars)—is planning his much heralded demonstration some time today or tomorrow with the aim of getting himself named. There is, of course, to be a debate tonight. Can you, Mr. Speaker, give some idea of when the demonstration may take place so that my hon. Friends can be here not only to witness it but, if necessary, to vote overwhelmingly in your support and speed the hon. Gentleman back to Glasgow where he can finish his Christmas shopping?

Mr. Speaker: All sorts of rumours circulate at this time of year. I know nothing about such matters.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that you should rule the motion standing in the name of the Leader of the House incompetent, insofar as it is irregular under the rule of anticipation. Bearing in mind your statement that the Select Committee still has the ability to tackle the matter, I put it to you seriously that the motion falls within that rule. As you are aware, you have considerable powers in this respect. "Erskine May" states on page 380:

"Stated generally, the rule against anticipation . . . is that a matter must not be anticipated if it is contained in a more effective form of proceeding than the proceeding by which it is sought to be anticipated."

In effect, that means that you, Mr. Speaker, must apply a test: what is the most effective form of procedure on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? You must ask whether it is this motion or Standing Order No. 130. Standing Order No. 130 is a rule of the House; the motion is not. Standing Order No. 130 is clear and precise, and it is mandatory rather than discretionary.

May I also draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to page 381 of "Erskine May" which states:

"A matter already appointed for consideration by the House cannot be anticipated by a motion".

Standing Order No. 130, combined with Standing Order No. 104(2), says that there must be a nomination from the Select Committee. The Select Committee has made no report to us since 13 January, and on 13 January the Chairman of the Select Committee asked for the advice and instruction of the House. That has not yet appeared, but obviously we can now expect a further report.

"Erskine May" also says:

"in determining whether a discussion would be out of order on the ground of anticipation, the Speaker must have regard to the probability of the matter anticipated being brought before the House within a reasonable time"

under Standing Order No. 26.

There is a distinct probability of the matter being brought before the House under Standing Order No. 26 in

relation to your ruling. On those grounds, you should rule the motion irregular and incompetent and strike it off the Order Paper.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, you expect hon. Members on both sides of the House—this will disappoint the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the lad who asked you about a demonstration—to respect and obey the rules of the House. How do you, and others responsible for the Order Paper and the Standing Orders, expect us to respect the rules when they are manipulated and when the Government cheat in this fashion?

Mr. Speaker: I have looked carefully at this matter, as I expected the hon. Gentleman would raise a point of order on it. The motion on the Order Paper is in order; I am satisfied of that. The hon. Gentleman asked about the rule of anticipation. The rule against anticipation is applied only if an alternative proposal is likely to be anticipated. We are not expecting a motion from the Committee of Selection at present.

I realise that there are strongly held views about the contents of the motion, but such opinions should be expressed in the debate that is to follow rather than in points of order addressed to me. It may assist the House if I announce now that I have made full use of the motion on the business of the House which was passed last Friday and have selected all three amendments for Division at the end of the debate. That will give hon. Members an opportunity to register the distinctive point of view that the amendments represent. That is the end of my role in this matter. We cannot pursue it in points of order, at the expense of an important social security debate.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. What would happen if the Opposition failed to nominate any Members to a Select Committee through the usual channels? How would the House deal with that?

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Chairman of the Select Committee.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance and assistance as a Back Bencher who will be greatly affected by the motion. Can you, Sir, confirm that there is no way that a Back Bench Member can be ordered or instructed to attend a Select Committee? Can you also confirm that if any Select Committee does not perform its role adequately it does a disservice to the objectives laid down for the Select Committees when they were first set up?

Mr. Speaker: The House could order an hon. Member to attend a Select Committee.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Further to the points of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), Mr. Speaker. If the House passes the motion in the name of the Leader of the House, we shall in effect be giving official recognition to a breach of Standing Order No. 130. My question is simple: how can this House, or any sane assembly, give official recognition to a breach of its own Standing Orders without first suspending or amending those Standing Orders?

Mr. Speaker: That is the matter raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), and I have already ruled on it.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to pursue the matter about anticipation. How can we be sure that the Chairman of the Committee of Selection is not about to come before the House, further to his report of last January, and make an announcement on this matter? Does not the matter therefore fall within the rule of anticipation?

Mr. Speaker: It is not known at present that any such announcement is expected.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the point raised by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), you said that you did not anticipate any announcement coming from the Committee of Selection. As the meetings of the Committee of Selection are held in private, and as no report has been published by the Committee in recent weeks on this subject, I would ask you, Sir, how you have knowledge of something which I should not have thought was immediately within your knowledge.

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge that that is likely to happen.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that yesterday certain allegations were made by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). I brought those allegations, which were inaccurate and untrue, to your attention last night. Through your good offices and those of the usual channels, I received an apology from the hon. Gentleman which said:

> "You make it quite clear in the record that you were not seeking a higher personal salary, and for that implication that my remarks may have carried I do apologise."

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his letter and consider the matter closed.

Mr. Martin Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Having checked *Hansard* early this morning, may I say that I had intended to make a full statement of apology in the House but, having received advice on the best practice, I wrote to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and I felt that the matter would rest there.

However, having begun to read my letter publicly on the Floor of the House, the hon. Gentleman has done himself and the House less than a service in reading only the first paragraph of my letter. I made it clear to him that I apologised for the fact that it could have been interpreted from my remarks yesterday that he was seeking a higher salary. I went on to say that I utterly deplored the practice of Labour Members in seeking greater facilities. If the hon. Gentleman wants to read only half the letter, I have no reason to apologise for the view that I expressed yesterday that we have adequate resources for our secretarial allowance, and it is disgraceful that the matter should have been raised in this way.

Mr. Speaker: It will soon be Christmas. An apology has been made. May we leave the matter there?

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday, the hon. Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), through points of order to you, made

[Mr. Peter Rost]

some personal allegations against me in my absence based upon and quoting from *The Guardian* of last Thursday. The article is inaccurate and legal action is in hand.

My interests in and contribution to energy efficiency for the last 18 years are well known inside and outside the House. Where those involve commercial interests, they are declared. I deeply resent the accusation that in pursuing such interests I am motivated by personal gain, I have brought the House into disrepute or that I have or seek commercial interests that may abuse my position as a Member of Parliament. I deeply resent and deny the accusation that I have pursued or would seek to pursue any interests that might work against the United Kingdom economy or industry. The contrary is the truth.

I seek your protection, Mr. Speaker, and ask you to invite the hon. Members for Cunninghame, North and for Sunderland, South to withdraw their damaging and inaccurate allegations made behind the cloak of parliamentary privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his personal position absolutely clear.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for delaying the House by mentioning yet again the motion in the name of the Leader of the House. When my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) said that if the motion was passed it would breach one of the Standing Orders of the House, the Leader of the House nodded his head in agreement. Is it in order for the Government to table a motion which, if passed, would breach a Standing Order of the House? If it is in order, does it mean that any Opposition party could table a motion which, if passed by the House, would breach its Standing Orders? It is a serious matter.

Mr. Speaker: The motion does not breach the Standing Orders of the House. It recognises a difficulty, but, as I told the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), even if it were passed, it would not prevent the Committee of Selection from coming forward with names for a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Sillars: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I have dealt with the point of order.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you were to look at item No. 39 on page 735 of the Order Paper, you would see that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) has consistently called for more facilities to be made available to Members of Parliament. This would cost a considerable amount——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a continuation of an argument that arose yesterday. It is not appropriate to carry it on today.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Bristol Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the Bristol Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) (Amendment) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a very important debate today on two social security orders that must end at 7 o'clock. I cannot say more than I have already said on the motion in the name of the Leader of the House, but I shall hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Welsh: You said, Mr. Speaker, that the motion is not a breach of the Standing Order, but it is, in the sense that it is a failure to implement it. Who is the guardian of Standing Orders in the House? How can the motion be implemented? The rights of minority parties in a democracy are a basic matter affecting the entire House.

Mr. Speaker: The House as a whole is the guardian of the Standing Orders. I have already said that the motion does not breach the Standing Orders, but it leaves the matter open. The hon. Gentleman can speak to the amendment on the Order Paper in the names of his hon. Friends, and the matter will be decided by the House.

Social Security

4.34 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions and Allocation of Contributions) (Re-rating) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

I understand that it would be for the convenience of the House if we also debated the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1988.

The first order deals with the re-rating of national insurance contributions and lifts them upwards in accordance with practice. The second order uprates social security benefits and both apply to 1989-90.

At the outset, may I make a point that is familiar but nevertheless bears repeating? The massive increase in expenditure on social security benefits for the coming year is about £3·4 billion. It is possible for the nation and the Government to afford such a massive increase only because we have a successful economic policy which brings considerable benefits to our people and provides the resources for the upratings. We are trying to strike a balance between the interests of those in receipt of benefits and the working population who must pay to provide those benefits.

In the coming year we plan to spend nearly £27·5 billion on contributory benefits. As the House is aware, the key to the contributory principle is that entitlement to these benefits is earned by the payment of national insurance contributions. The Government's proposals for national insurance contributions were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 1 November. We do not propose to change the rates of class 1 contributions in the coming year; 1989-90 will be the sixth year in succession when we have not increased the main class 1 rates. The lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions which is linked by statute to the basic retirement pension rate, rounded down to the nearest pound, will be £43 a week from next April. The upper earnings limit will be fixed at £325 a week, nearly seven and a half times the basic pension level. The regulations which bring the new earnings limits into effect will be made and laid as soon as the benefits uprating order has been approved by Parliament.

The re-rating proposals are contained in the draft Social Security (Contributions and Allocation of Contributions) (Re-rating) Order 1988. The House will recall that in 1985 we reduced the contribution rates paid by lower-paid workers and their employers to help those workers and to reduce employment costs. The reduced contribution rates cut significantly the impact of contributions on people on lower earnings, but they did not affect their benefit entitlement in any way. We now propose to increase each of the earnings limits below which the lower contribution rates are payable in line with inflation, rounded to the nearest £5.

The proposals will further ease the burden on some lower-paid workers and their employers, and I am sure that the House will welcome that. Most other employees will not pay any more in contributions, unless their earnings rise. People earning at or above the new upper earnings limit of £325 a week will pay £1·80 extra a week, or £1·44 if they are in contracted-out employment. In 1989-90, class 1 contributions are expected to yield about £31 billion which will be apportioned between the national insurance fund and the National Health Service.

The House is aware that self-employed people pay their national insurance contributions in two parts—the flat rate class 2 contribution and the profits-related class 4 contribution. We do not propose any change to the class 4 rate, which will remain at 6·3 per cent. in the coming year. The profits limits for class 4 contributions, which determine the level of profits on which contributions are payable, will be increased, broadly in line with the earnings limits for class 1 contributions, to £5,050 and £16,900 respectively. The upper profits limit is exactly 52 times the class 1 upper earnings limit. We also propose to increase the class 2 contribution by 20p to £4·25 a week from next April. The class 2 rate is linked to the class 1 lower earnings limit and its increase reflects the proposed rise in that limit.

Self-employed people with profits at or above the proposed upper profits limit of £16,900 will pay about £57 more in the coming year. Self-employed people are expected to contribute about £955 million in contributions in 1989-90.

The draft order also increases the amount of class 1 contributions allocated to meeting the costs of the National Health Service. From April 1989 we propose to increase employees' NHS allocation to 1·05 per cent. and the employers' allocation to 0·9 per cent. in respect of earnings on which class 1 contributions are paid. The allocation will raise over £4 billion for the NHS in the coming year.

The report by the Government Actuary on the effects of our proposals on the national insurance fund has been laid with the re-rating orders. It is estimated that the total income received by the national insurance fund will be slightly more than £29 billion in 1989-90 and total expenditure, including administration, is estimated to be slightly more than £28·5 billion. The surplus anticipated for the coming year will be £500 million, which is much lower than was originally expected for the current year. However, that surplus must be kept in perspective. It is equivalent to just one week's benefit expenditure paid from the fund in the coming year.

I shall now turn to what I believe the House will find the more interesting of the two orders.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Before my hon. Friend moves on, will he comment on two matters that were raised by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and discuss them with the Treasury? The first point relates to the lower-earnings-limit trap. Someone on £43 a week who takes an extra £1 in pay will be worse off.

The second point relates to the upper earnings limit above which 34 per cent. deductions become 25 per cent. deductions. Will the Department examine those two problems and discuss with the Treasury ways of sorting them out?

Mr. Scott: There are no plans to change that. I understand the desirability of smoothing out those matters and the Government are aware of that. There are no plans to alter the present pattern of national insurance contributions and their rates.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Minister follow the advice of his hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and formulate plans for changing national insurance contributions? Is the Minister aware that in this

[Mr. Frank Field]

country we have 40 per cent. of all part-time work in Europe? The reason for that is that we have built into our system an enormous bias against people creating full-time jobs. If they do, both employers and employees have to pay contributions. Therefore, I add to the plea made by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield and ask the Minister to examine not only the effect on marginal tax rates of moving into and out of national insurance, but whether employers' contributions should begin at the first pound of earnings.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman is knowledgeable on this matter. If there were a flat rate of national insurance contributions across the board, we would not face that problem. The problem arises because we are introducing lower rates for national insurance contributions, which, in turn, introduces steps. I can see the desirability of smoothing out all this, but that would require substantial thought. We have such considerations in mind, but there are no present plans to deal with the problem. I accept the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) that such matters might be discussed in Government.

The second order uprates the benefits, and I understand that some Opposition Members intend to vote against it. I shall deal with three matters relating to the uprating order. The first involves pensions. On the radio, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), if I heard him correctly, accused the Government of neglecting Britain's pensioners. If the Government's record amounts to neglect, heaven knows what description would be adequate for what happened to pensioners under the previous Labour Government. I wholly reject the hon. Gentleman's allegation and shall seek to prove that it is the last accusation that could be legitimately levelled against the Government.

The Labour party tends to be obsessed only with the level of the basic state pension. Any pensioner in Britain will say that the issue is much wider than that. We have honoured our pledge to protect pensioners against inflation rather than follow the path of the previous Labour Government who made grand promises and then had cruelly to dash hopes when they were unable to fulfil their pledges.

Mr. Frank Field: Before the Minister leaves the previous Labour Government's record, would he care to remind the House that that Government, despite their faults, increased the national insurance pension by 20 per cent. in real terms? Will the Government match that record?

Mr. Scott: I freely acknowledge that that is a fact. I am trying to persuade hon. Members——

Mr. Field: It is true.

Mr. Scott: I have acknowledged that it is true. If the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) listens, he will learn. That is a fat lot of good to pensioners if their savings are destroyed and the opportunity to obtain other income is diminished. Pensioners are interested in what happens to their total incomes—the money they can spend on the goods and services they need. That is more important to them than the basic state pension. Our case on that broader issue is unassailable when compared with Labour's record.

Under the previous Labour Government total pensioner incomes reduced from 55 per cent. of average manual earnings to 53 per cent. by the time the Labour party left office. Between 1979 and 1986 we restored total pensioner incomes to the level at which they stood when the Labour party took office and they now represent 60 per cent. of annual manual earnings in Britain.

We have done more than that. Our period in Government has been characterised by a steady growth in pensioner living standards. We have tackled inflation in a way that escaped the ability of Labour Members when they held office. By tackling inflation we have made it possible for pensioners' savings to contribute significantly to their living standards.

Pensioner incomes reduced by an average of 3·4 per cent. per year during the years in which the Labour party held office. Since we have been in office, pensioner incomes have increased by 7 per cent. in real terms in each year to an overall total of 64 per cent. over the first seven years. That is important to British pensioners. We have also increased the basic state pension.

We have encouraged and are encouraging still further the spread of occupational pension funds and personal pensions. The result of our policies is that, over our first seven years in office, pensioner incomes rose twice as fast as the incomes of the population as a whole. They increased by 23 per cent., compared with 3 per cent. when Labour was in office. In other words, we have increased pensioners' standard of living by a factor five times as great as that which the Labour party achieved.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): That cannot be denied. However, how much of that figure was accounted for by SERPS coming on stream? The Minister must acknowledge that that was introduced by the Labour Government in 1978 and was bound to come to fruition in the early 1980s.

Mr. Scott: I cannot give the House a breakdown of the figures. However, inflation is important and I have given the House the figures about the impact of inflation on pensioner incomes and savings. The greater spread of occupational pensions and the steps we are taking to encourage that are also important. I freely acknowledge that the introduction of SERPS was a step in the right direction.

However, the Labour party introduced a scheme for SERPS which would have been unaffordable in the middle of the next century and which would have been a burden that most taxpayers could not afford. We have modified SERPS and made it more affordable. Therefore, we are not following the path of the previous Labour Government and raising pensioners' hopes with grand promises, only to dash them because of mismanagement of the economy.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): My hon. Friend is quite right when he says that pensioners' incomes have increased, but there is a danger of misleading the House. On average, the incomes of most pensioners have increased substantially. However, the other side of the coin is that the incomes of a large number of pensioners have decreased. That fact tends to get hidden in the talk about averages.

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend has anticipated what I was about to say. It was precisely because we were conscious of the fact that not all pensioners had shared evenly in the improvement in pensioners' incomes that my right hon. Friend made his announcement that from next October additional help will be made available to them in the form of a new and extended structure of pensioner premiums under the income support scheme. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Member for Livingston does not like to be reminded that this Government have tackled the long-standing problem of the poorer pensioners. I do not intend to go over the ground that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State covered so comprehensively in his statement. However, we have taken steps to tackle the problem and we have provided additional resources for that purpose. It will cost nearly £200 million in a full year.

The Government's record on pensions is unassailable, but successive upratings by this Government have also ensured that the benefits paid to people who suffer from long-term illnesses and disability have more than kept their value. Many disabled people have received a real terms increase in the amount of benefit that they receive. Those in receipt of the mobility allowance have had a 9 per cent. increase in real terms since July 1978. An estimated 190,000 people under pensionable age receive more from the disability premium, together with income support, than they would have received in supplementary benefit alone.

Our record of a sustained and enhanced value of benefits has to be set against the background of a prodigious rise in the number of recipients. For example, since 1979 the number of invalidity benefit recipients has increased by 86 per cent. to 1·1 million. The number of attendance allowance recipients has increased by 180 per cent. to 740,000 and the number of those in receipt of the mobility allowance has increased by 470 per cent. to 540,000. This combination of real increases in the amount of benefit paid and the large increase in the number of recipients has produced a 90 per cent. rise in real expenditure since 1979 on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled. That is a record of which the Government can be proud.

Total expenditure on these benefits now stands at over £7·3 billion, a real terms increase of £3·5 billion since 1979. Opposition Members, including the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), have suggested that increased expenditure attributable to the increased numbers of recipients is in some way not so praiseworthy as an increase in the real value of the benefits. However, I believe that we can express quiet satisfaction, if not pride, in the fact that at a time of tremendous extra demand for disability benefits we have managed to cope with the increased numbers and to maintain and at times to enhance the real value of the benefits.

It is against the background of an unprecedented coverage of social security assistance to disabled people that the Government can properly take credit for devoting some new money to new, imaginative and flexible ways of providing financial help that is outside the benefit system. The independent living fund is already proving to be a unique success in its flexible response to severely disabled people who need to buy high levels of care in order to live independently in their own homes. With that sort of success in mind, I was particularly glad that my right hon. Friend was able to announce to the House in his uprating statement that we are providing £5 million, and the clearing banks another £5 million, to set up a trust fund to enable Motability to increase its help to disabled people to obtain vehicles.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Minister confirm that a mere 354 people have benefited from the independent living fund?

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Gentleman refers to a mere 354 people. A new scheme such as the independent living fund requires personal visits by social workers to applicants to assess their needs if they are to maintain their independence. For that reason the independent living fund has got off to a slow start, but the vast majority of the payments to those people are made on a weekly basis. Those payments will continue. I am absolutely certain that the independent living fund will be a very important part of the support that the Government give to the more severely disabled people.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): How much has been spent on advertising the existence of the independent living fund? Does it match the £66 million that was spent on advertising shares in nine publicly owned authorities?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman should make a more sensible intervention than that.

Mr. Wareing: What is the answer?

Mr. Scott: We are talking about a small number of people who need exceptional help in order to maintain their independence in the community. It is the responsibility of the independent living fund's trustees to advertise. They have placed advertisements in the specialist press so that social workers and others who are in touch with severely disabled people will know what kind of support can be given to the severely disabled. They are also responsible for distributing thousands of leaflets and posters to the offices that are in touch with severely disabled people in order to get the message across. The number of applications being made to the fund is a tribute to that publicity. I am quite confident that the independent living fund will form a very important part of the support for severely disabled people.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the Disablement Income Group's magazine *Progress*, No. 15, it is confirmed that by August of this year the fund had received 800 applications and that applications are now arriving at the rate of 25 a day?

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that additional information.

I turn finally to a subject that I know arouses strong feelings in all parts of the House and that I understand is to be used as a pretext by the Opposition to vote against the second order. We all know why the hon. Member for Livingston should be seeking, with varying degrees of success, if I understand correctly the radio reports, to persuade his right hon. and hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* I am not surprised that Opposition Members do not like listening to this. Do they intend to troop through the Lobby and vote against pension increases and increased benefits for disabled people? Is that where the hon. Member for Livingston is to lead his Back Benchers? I am

[Mr. Scott]

astonished that he should be thinking along those lines, and I am not at all surprised that the Opposition should not like to have it spelt out to them.

The two best descriptions that I heard on the radio this morning about the path down which the hon. Member for Livingston is seeking to lead his Back Benchers were, first, that they have scored an own goal and, secondly, that they have shot themselves in the foot. I leave the House to decide which of those two descriptions is the best way to describe the path down which they are going.

This year—as last year—we have not uprated child benefit. However, the hon. Member for Livingston was wrong this morning to describe the stand taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as a freeze for all time. My right hon. Friend is under a duty year by year to review child benefit and to decide whether it should be uprated. It may be that next year or the year after it will be appropriate for child benefit to be increased and to be uprated in line with inflation, but this year we have decided to follow a different path.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I am most grateful for this ray of hope at the end of the tunnel. Will the Minister explain precisely what considerations led to this year's freeze when the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a surplus of £10,000 million to give away in the Budget? What possible additional surplus would lead him next year to believe that he was able to afford an increase in child benefit?

Mr. Scott: We shall have to wait and see. If the hon. Gentleman, instead of enunciating the views that he expressed this morning on the radio, had read my hon. Friend's uprating statement, he would have understood perfectly the arguments that lay behind the decision not to uprate child benefit this year.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Leaving aside the question of uprating, and taking a little further what the Minister has been telling the House in the past few minutes, would it not be helpful if he were on record as telling the House and the country that the question of uprating must be separated from the continued existence of child benefit? Will he give the House an undertaking that at least until the next general election, when a future Government may or may not have a mandate for replacing it, child benefit will continue to be paid as now, with the decision on uprating being left from one year to the next?

Mr. Scott: That is precisely the stance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken. Child benefit will continue to be paid to the mother as now, and the decision will be taken annually whether to uprate it fully or partially. My right hon. Friend will take those decisions at the appropriate time.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I recommend to my hon. Friend and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State an excellent article by Hermione Parker in *The Times* today about targeting benefit and whether we should be content with a system of child benefit when a family earning £137 a week pays more in tax than it receives in child benefit.

Mr. Scott: I read Miss Parker's article. I thought that it was rather long on analysis and short on prescription. It covered familiar territory. My hon. Friend and I have discussed the matter from time to time and I understand very well that if one applies a universal benefit, one maximises take-up, but the benefit tends to be ill-focused on those who need it most. On the other hand, if a benefit is better focused and targeted on those who need help, there is a take-up problem. Using a phrase which first came from the Opposition, my judgment is that a sensible social security system needs a judicious mixture of universal and targeted benefits. That is a sensible way forward. That judicious mixture may well apply not only to the range of benefits, but to the time when upratings and other measures take effect. It remains the duty of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to weigh all those matters in the balance at each uprating.

It is worth reminding the House that, although child benefit has not been uprated this year, it remains a very important means of support for families in Britain. It comprises one tenth of social security expenditure amounting to some £4·5 billion. That sum continues to go to families in child benefit.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Surely the issue is that targeted benefits have to reach the target. The thing that bothers us is that the target benefits are not reaching the people who need them. I hope that the Minister has seen a press release from the London Welfare Rights Officers Group which shows that boroughs around London cannot even get the leaflets to tell people about their rights. What does the Minister propose to do about that?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman draws my attention to any such cases, of course I shall look at them. But I acknowledged the problem of take-up. Of course it is in the Government's interests to seek to ensure that take-up is as high as possible. If we provide benefits, we want them to reach people and we shall be taking further steps to increase the take-up of family credit.

Child benefit remains a very important benefit. I want the House to be absolutely clear about the effect of freezing child benefit on the uprating of family credit. Child benefit is disregarded in the assessment of family credit, so unless we compensate families receiving family benefit they will suffer from the fact that child benefit is not to be uprated. Therefore, we are compensating them. We are uprating child credits by the "Rossi" index and then adding to them the 45p by which the child benefit would have been uprated had we increased it in line with the increase in the RPI. Therefore, families on family credit have lost nothing by the freezing of child benefit. As I have explained, they are gaining considerably because we are adding a further 50p to each child credit at a total cost of some £25 million. Thus we are increasing each child credit by 95p in addition to the increase for inflation.

I shall illustrate the effect from next April. A family with just one child aged five and with gross earnings of £75 would presently get family credit of about £25 and would be entitled to more than £30 under the new rates from next April and would still be entitled to some family credit if its gross earnings were up to £139 a week. Families with two children would be even better off. The benefit is not limited to the very poor. Many families on quite reasonable earnings can qualify for the extra help of family credit.

This month we are issuing a leaflet about family credit for every family collecting child benefit from the Post Office. I hope, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expressed this view at Question Time yesterday, that hon. Members on both sides of the House will take every opportunity to bring the benefits to the attention of their constituents. We are running a radio campaign and at the time of the uprating next April we shall be running a major advertising campaign involving television and other media.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister use his influence with Conservative-controlled Bradford council which is closing three benefit advice shops dealing with more than 50,000 inquiries a year and providing valuable advice? One-stop shops with leaflets, if they actually arrive, are no substitute for the expert advice which, according to the Minister, fits in exactly with his policy on the take-up of benefits.

Mr. Scott: The closure of those advice shops is a matter for Bradford city council. However, our own social security offices are perfectly capable of providing advice to claimants who may need help.

Mr. Rooker: Where is it stated that it is the function of civil servants in the Department of Social Security to give advice? It is not their function. That is why on every leaflet that the Department produces constituents and claimants are directed to citizens advice bureaux. Is it the function of civil servants to give advice? If it is, can we have a proper statement and a proper advice shop in every local office?

Mr. Scott: The Government give massive help to citizens advice bureaux across the country, but there is no question but that the staff of social security offices are willing and able to advise claimants about their rights.

The uprating package for income-related benefits which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already announced and against which I understand the Opposition intend to vote is a package for poorer families. It is an essential element in the Government's efforts to ensure that poorer families are given extra help rather than spreading the jam thinly across the population. We are making extra resources available to children and young people through income support and housing benefit as well as family credit. The benefits are totally in accord with our policy aims of concentrating help on those who need it most. The uprating provides for substantially more than inflation. For example, the income support allowance for a child under 11 has gone up by no less than 9·3 per cent.

I understand the arguments advanced by my hon. Friends and others for universal as opposed to focused benefits. I repeat my belief that we need a judicious mixture. Without prejudging next year, I believe that our priorities this year are absolutely right to concentrate help in the way that I have discussed with the House. It is a generous uprating which directs massive resources to where they are most needed. It is a substantial increase in a programme which is already the biggest in Government. Our proposals strike a fair balance between protecting the interests of benefit recipients and the interests of those who pay for those benefits. I commend the orders to the House.

5.8 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I am delighted that the Minister began by putting on the record the contrast between the ways in which the Government and the last Labour Government treated pensioners. He was encouraged by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) to place on record—and, as he admitted, it is factually correct—that under the Labour Government the state pension increased by 20 per cent. in real terms over six years. I entirely concur with the Minister that the Government have found that unaffordable; they certainly have not attempted to emulate it. Over the nine years in which they have been in office, the state pension has increased by a beggarly 2 per cent. in real terms. That is the true contrast between the stewardship of the Government and that of the last Labour Government.

It is perfectly fair to focus on those figures, because the state pension is the part of pensioners' income for which the state is responsible. It is not true that the last Labour Government were obsessed only with state pensions. On the contrary, they introduced SERPS, the earnings-related pension, because they recognised the inadequacy of the basic state pension. Like any income-related or occupational pension, it would have taken a couple of decades to come fully into use. It will never do so, because the Government have remain obsessed with the state pension and only two years ago halved the value of SERPS for future pensioners on the ground—the Minister rightly anticipated this—that its future value would not be affordable. The only problem is that, although that was a statement by Ministers, it was not subsequently supported by the Government Actuary, who pointed out that the financial costs could be met. It was doubtful whether the political will would be found to meet those costs, which is at the bottom of the contrast.

The debate stems from the uprating statement that was made two months ago. On that occasion, we pressed for an emergency debate so that the House could express a view on the Government's decision to freeze child benefit to death. The application was refused, but the Leader of the House said that the House would have an opportunity to debate the freezing of child benefit when the uprating orders were before the House. He went so far as to promise us a debate before Christmas, which was not much of a concession because it is necessary to resolve the orders before Christmas so that the books can be made up in time for April. We are humble people and take what crumbs we can from the Leader of the House.

Having said that this debate was the right time to express our opposition to the freezing of child benefit, the Government machine has spent the past couple of days on heavy briefing saying that we are voting against the orders because we are opposed to any increase in pensions. For all that I know, it has been briefing people in the Press Gallery that we are in favour of cutting pensions, turning off heating supplies to the elderly and turning them out into the night.

I was startled to read in the *Sunday Times* that I had turned down a separate vote on child benefit. Given the lengths to which we went to obtain a separate debate, it is rich cheek to suggest that we turned one down. Conservative Members know that that is not true and that the House was never offered a separate debate.

[Mr. Robin Cook]

[Interruption.] I asked in the House, and we also asked through the usual channels, for a separate debate on child benefit, but we were consistently refused one.

The Secretary of State prides himself on the fact that he has made no secret of his hostility to child benefit but he has never had the courage to ask the House to put it in cold storage. It is on record in the *Sunday Times*, courtesy of Rupert Murdoch, that the Secretary of State, or Bernard Ingham—it is not clear who—thinks that there shoud be a separate vote on child benefit. I am happy to assure the Secretary of State that his dearest wish will be fulfilled. We shall provide the House with the opportunity of a separate vote on child benefit in the new year and invite it to consider whether it wants Britain to approach 1992 as the only country in Europe that is running away from child support. Tonight, we shall merely treat with indifference the miserable increases provided for in the uprating order.

Nowhere are the increases more miserable than in those offered to pensioners. The uprating order provides that pensions will be increased by 5·9 per cent. in April but long before April inflation will hit 7 per cent. Moreover, a large part of that inflation will hit pensioners especially hard as a result of Government action. The cost of electricity has increase by this year by 9 per cent., and in April it will increase a further 6 per cent. Water has increased by 10 per cent. this year and in April it will increase by by a further 10 per cent. Gas has increased by 6 per cent. this year and in April will increase by a further 6 per cent. Rents have increased this year by 12 per cent. and in April will increase by a further 10 per cent. All those increases are in sectors directly under the influence of the Government, but they are all increasing at a greater rate than that which the Government are offering pensioners.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): While the hon. Gentleman is dealing with pensioners, perhaps he will reflect on the wise words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that there is no point in promising the earth but delivering the International Monetary Fund. In so reflecting, will he say what happened to the pensioners' Christmas bonus in 1975 and 1976?

Mr. Cook: I have already told the House—the hon. Gentleman needs to be told the same thing twice before he gets it through both ears, so I will repeat myself—that under the last Labour Government pensioners' income increased by 20 per cent. in real terms, despite the IMF, the difficulty that the Government faced, and the fact that we did not have oil revenues to squander on the rich.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend has made it quite clear that the Opposition will facilitate a specific and targeted vote on the freezing of child benefit. Will he make it clear that the Opposition will be prepared to make it a free vote? Will the Government do the same?

Mr. Scott: In the heat of the moment, the hon. Gentleman may have used words that, when he checks *Hansard*, may not prove to be accurate. He said that under the Labour Government pensioners' incomes increased by 20 per cent. in real terms; they increased by only 3 per cent.

Mr. Cook: We should be delighted to have the Minister's figures on the record as often as he cares to repeat them. Does the Minister agree that under the Government pensions have increased by only 2 per cent.? I will give way to him if he will agree about the clear contrast between increases of 20 per cent. under the last Labour Government and only 2 per cent. under this one. Moreover, that 2 per cent. increase has been made over the past nine years. The Minister is anxious to talk about the last Labour Government, but it would be nice if he was equally as anxious to discuss the Government's miserable record.

Another set of figures are relevant——

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is wriggling.

Mr. Cook: I am not wriggling. We would welcome confirmation of those figures from the Secretary of State. There is a tenfold difference between them, and it was achieved in two thirds of the time, which is why Labour Members can hold up their heads about what the Labour Government did for pensioners.

Ministers constantly take refuge in the increase in SERPS and what has happened to occupational pensions, but they should be ashamed of what they have done to state pensions.

Another set of figures is more relevant than the issue of prices—those for inflation, not only in prices but in earnings. The Labour Government provided for pensions to be increased in line not with prices but with earnings. If that formula had been retained, the basic state pension today would be worth £11 a week more for the single pensioner and £18 a week more for couples, which is about a quarter of its present value. That is the measure of the difference between the record of the Labour Government and this one.

Mr. McCrindle *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I will give way later. I anticipate that the hon. Gentleman will want to say something about child benefit, so he may wish to wait until I reach that part of my speech.

While prices have increased by 5·9 per cent. over the past year, earnings have risen by 8·6 per cent. Why was it adequate for the pension to keep pace with prices when everybody else was trying to get ahead of prices? That difference between inflation of prices and inflation of earnings would mean that the increase that we are debating tonight, had it gone up with earnings, would be almost half as much again—that is, an extra £1·15 a week for a single pensioner. That is the equivalent of a daily newspaper every day or half a pint of milk a day. That is the meaning of £1 a week if one lives on the subsistence income of so many pensioners, and that is what the order cheats them of.

Mr. McCrindle: The hon. Gentleman has made the perfectly reasonable point that, under his Government, pensions were linked to earnings, whereas they are now linked to prices. Does he consider it appropriate to remind the House that, desirable though that objective may have been, out of the five years during which his Government were in office, it was possible to carry through that link on only three occasions? That was as a result, I seem to recall, of the appalling economic situation over which he presided.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman was good enough to say that my point was entirely reasonable. Let me respond in the same moderate way. He has also made a perfectly reasonable point. The pension was fully uprated in line with earnings three years out of five, which compares starkly with the performance of this Government, who have not uprated in line with earnings in one out of nine years. The bottom line is that, as a result of the three increases, the pension was worth 20 per cent. more at the end of those five years. Conservative Members cannot get away from that figure.

Many pensioners will not smell a penny from this uprating, because they are the victims of last April's cuts. Last April, they found that the cash that they received exceeded their entitlement under the new rules. As a result, their benefit was frozen at its current level, and it will not go up with inflation next April. Next April, 500,000 claimants will get no increase as a result of transitional protection. The reason they are caught in the new version of the property trap that was invented by the Government is that they were receiving extra additions for diet, laundry and heating, all of which were abolished in April.

Mr. Frank Field: By definition, targeted.

Mr. Cook: As my hon. Friend says, by definition, all those extra additions were targeted on the frail, the elderly and the disabled. We are talking not just about 500,000 claimants but about 500,000 of the most vulnerable and most disabled claimants. The Disability Alliance calculates that it will take several years before some of the most severely disabled claimants get an increase in any uprating order.

If there is one thing worse than getting no increase because one is receiving transitional protection, it is losing one's transitional protection. It is appropriate to reflect on the thousands of claimants who, since last April, have lost their transitional protection and, next April will find themselves worse off in cash terms than they were last April.

Three weeks ago, I brought to the attention of the House claimants who had lost their transitional protection, because, under the party of the family, they were ill-advised enough to get married, and that triggered the loss of their transitional protection. I share with the House three other cases, all of whom were corralled among the 88 per cent. last April who we were told were not losers as a result of the changes.

The first is a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), Mrs. Edwards. Mrs. Edwards was in receipt of £7·77 towards the extra costs of a diet that she required for herself. Since last April, her husband has died. As a result of the death of her husband there was triggered a fresh assessment of entitlement to social security. In the course of that fresh assessment she lost all her transitional protection, even though it was in respect of an allowance for her own dietary and health needs. She still has the same health needs, but she gets no help for them.

Mr. Frank Field: There is targeting.

Mr. Cook: The second case comes to me from Sandwell citizens advice bureau. It relates to Mrs. Finden, aged 85 and a widow for 26 years. She is severely disabled with arthritis. Recently, Mrs. Finden had the misfortune to be admitted to hospital for seven weeks. After six weeks her benefit was suspended. She came out of hospital only one week later, but, because her benefit had been suspended, when she came out there was a fresh assessment of her benefit. Because there was a fresh assessment of her benefit, she lost her transitional protection. Having come out of hospital, she is £3·25 a week worse off. In its letter, the citizens advice bureau explained:

"We find it difficult to explain to this elderly and confused claimant why her benefit has gone down."

The Government are putting doctors in the bizarre position of advising patients that, irrespective of their health, it would be better to get out within six weeks, because they might otherwise lose part of their benefit.

It is not only pensioners who are losing transitional protection. One can lose transitional protection by having children. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has drawn my attention to the case of one of his constituents, Mr. Peter McKay. In April, Mr. Peter McKay was left with £11·50 a week transitional protection for laundry and diet. His wife recently had another child. The other child should have brought about an entitlement to increase in income support of £10·75 a week. However, as their benefit already exceeded their entitlement by more than that sum, they did not get a penny of the additional sum to which they had been entitled for that child. In other words, they are left with an extra mouth to feed and no extra resources. Effectively, they are being asked to spend on the child the resources that formerly went to Mr. McKay for his own diet.

That case brings us naturally and inevitably to the most objectionable part of the uprating order. The Minister said that this is a package for poor families. We certainly assent. It is a package to make families poorer. Paragraph 8 of the order provides that child benefit will be frozen for the second year running. To be fair to the Secretary of State, when he spoke of uprating, he made no pretence that the decision had been reluctantly forced on him this year alone by the shortage of ready cash. It would be difficult to make that case. The Chancellor is sitting on a Budget surplus which is substantial enough to support even his solid frame. The last time he counted the surplus, he came up with a figure of £10,000 million. It is fair to say that people who have made stabs at it since then have come up with larger figures.

How much bigger must the Budget surplus be before the Government can afford to increase child benefit? These are the circumstances in which the Secretary of State should be grabbing his share for claimants. The rich had their share of the Budget in March. It is now time for claimants to get the crumbs from the table. Instead, the Secretary of State is planning to spend £100 million less next year than he planned to spend last January in the expenditure White Paper.

That is the background to the freeze in child benefit. We have a Chancellor who has more money than he expected, and a Secretary of State who discovers that he has more room to spare in his budget than expected. It should not have been so difficult for the Secretary of State to get the money out of the Treasury. After all, who is the man with whom he negotiates at the Treasury but the Chief Secretary? Who was the Chief Secretary two years ago? He was the Minister for Social Security, who, only two years ago in Committee said:

"we believe that universal child benefit is desirable."

I am afraid that he was wrong. He said:

[Mr. Cook]

"We are likely to be boringly consistent on that point for the foreseeable future, and, I hope, permanently."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 6 March 1986; c. 684.]

He was the person with whom the Secretary of State had to negotiate—a man who regarded his commitment to universal child benefit as boringly consistent.

Against that background it is quite clear that the reason for the freeze in child benefit is not financial but political. To be fair, the Secretary of State is quite open about it. Since his appointment, I cannot recall the Secretary of State finding a kind word to say about child benefit. The benefit is a sorry thing. It is in the care of a team who are not committed to it. If they were more honest, they would say that they want to abolish it. At least then we would get a separate vote on it. Instead, they are allowing it to fade away by failing to do the annual maintenance.

Let me couch three arguments in terms which even Tory Members can relate to and understand. I invite them to think of child benefit, not as a benefit, but as a tax allowance. After all, it replaced child tax allowance and it is the only means by which we now recognise the extra cost of children. If hon. Gentlemen try to think about it as a tax allowance, I know how much more warmly they will think about it. Had child tax allowance remained, I have not the slightest doubt that they would have uprated it each year without pausing for thought.

It is instructive to compare and contrast what has happened to tax allowances and child benefit. As I said at Question Time yesterday, the married man's tax allowance has increased by 22 per cent. more than the rate of inflation under the Government while child benefit has fallen by 13 per cent. I did not get an answer yesterday, so I ask again: by what possible mental gymnastics can the Government argue that the cost of maintaining a wife has increased by one fifth and the cost of maintaining a child has decreased by one eighth? Why is there not the same chatter about how badly targeted the married man's tax allowance is? After all, like child benefit, it also goes to the rich. Indeed, unlike child benefit, it is worth more to the rich. They get their tax allowance at 40 per cent. not 25 per cent.

That brings me to another consideration why hon. Gentlemen should think of retaining child benefit. Child benefit is a highly efficient benefit. The Tory party claims to be the party of cost efficiency in the public sector. Child benefit has one of the smallest administrative overheads. Its administration costs 2·5 per cent. of total expenditure. That is almost half the administrative cost of family credit which takes 4·5 per cent. of total expenditure. I find it curious that the party of public efficiency should wish to change to a benefit which, pro rata, requires twice as many bureaucrats. I find it odd that the party of targeting is in favour of a benefit in the form of family credit which is so badly aimed.

In January the Secretary of State and the Minister promised us that family credit would hit 60 per cent. of its target. They never explained why. When my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) challenged them, the Minister replied that of course family credit would be better known because more people would know about it. That appeared a rather circular chain of reasoning which was not entirely convincing. In the event, take-up of family credit is not 60 per cent. It is not even the 50 per cent. that family income supplement used to hit. It is still below 40 per cent.

There is now a cheerful cynicism being expressed on Government Back Benches—so far it has not crept forward to the Front Benches—that it is not their fault that the take-up rate is so low. They have done their duty. They have made the benefit available. It is not their fault that people do not rush forward to claim it. That is the look-out of those entitled to it. That argument will not do because Conservative Members are putting forward family credit as a substitute for uprating child benefit and child benefit does not go to 40 per cent., 50 per cent., or 60 per cent., but to 98 per cent. of those who are eligible.

Mr. Frank Field: It is well targeted.

Mr. Cook: It is extremely well targeted on mothers. Ninety-eight per cent. of mothers with young children claim and receive child benefit—not double but nearly treble the number who get on to family credit. I always understood that the Government believed in decisions being market-led and that one should repond to the market. It is clear from the take-up rate that the market demands child benefit. It is to that success story that this House and the Government should stick.

My final reason why the Tory party should retain child benefit and uprate it has been anticipated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for the past 10 minutes. The reason why the Treasury Bench and the Government should support child benefit is that, as they so frequently remind us, they are the party of the family. Child benefit is now the only universally applied recognition of the cost of bringing up children. It goes to the women who feed and clothe those children. For many women it is the only income that they can claim as their own and on which they can rely. It gives them a touch of independence of the family budget. As the author of this letter passed to me by Child Poverty Action Group said:

"As a woman with 2 children who had a husband earning £250 a week"—

well above family credit level—

"but provided us with nothing, the only way we survived was with our child benefit, and that was only because he could not get his hands on it."

That is the reality for many women. That is why the party of the family should support child benefit and its uprating.

It may well be that it is the fault of the father that those children were not being better provided for, but it was certainly not the fault of the children and why should they be penalised by having their benefit frozen? Heaven knows, child benefit is little enough—only one third to a quarter of the cost of bringing up a child in any week. It does not meet many of the new charges being levied on us. For example, for mothers in Bradford under a new Conservative council which now charges them £4 a week for school meals per child, that means over half of their child benefit.

A constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) is a widow with five children. Because she is a widow on widow's benefit she does not receive any family credit. She does not qualify. Nor does she receive any income support because her weekly income is exactly 14p above the income support level. Because she is not in receipt of income support, her children do not qualify for free school meals. Since the Conservatives gained control of Bradford city council she is faced with a weekly bill of £20 for school meals for those five children—an increase of £9 in this year alone. Moreover, under this Conservative Government her child

benefit is now worth £5·50 a week less than in 1979. For that lady child benefit is not, as the Secretary of State described it, a decorative overlay; it is one of the basic foundations of her budget. It is for her family the difference between one cooked meal a day and none.

It is for that lady's sake and the sake of her children that we shall return to this issue in the new year and give the House an opportunity to record its contempt of a Government who can find the cash for open-handed generosity to top rate taxpayers and funds that generosity by tight-fisted meanness to pensioners and children.

5.37 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I shall not comment or speculate on the sub-plot of the debate this afternoon, which is the intriguing question why the Opposition apparently thought that they would vote against the order and then decided that they would not after all. It is something to do with the fact that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who is leaving the Chamber, reminded himself that at one point he wanted to be the Opposition Chief Whip, so managed to persuade his colleagues that it would be remarkably foolish to vote against these orders.

I have no intention of voting against these orders because I welcome the increase embodied in them, particularly the greater help for those over 75 and some of the elderly disabled. It would be absurd to do anything other than support them.

Nevertheless, the Government are making a mistake in not uprating child benefit and I regret the decision in article 18 of part III of the order. A policy of continuously freezing child benefit would be a great mistake both politically and, more important, in terms of the interests of families.

I have spoken on this subject a number of times during the past year or so and I do not intend to weary the House by going over all the ground again. However, I could not let this debate pass without making one or two comments. A number of my hon. Friends and I will certainly look for an opportunity during the passage of the Social Security Bill to establish the principle that the existence of child benefit is right, and that for child benefit to do its job it must be uprated with inflation.

The Government say—and I understand the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister has made—that the increase in child benefit would do nothing for those with children on family credit and income support. I am not sure whether that would apply, too, to those on single parent benefit. What really does this attempt at targeting achieve? I remind the House that the money for the uprating was in the last public expenditure White Paper. There was in no sense a demand for additional money if the benefit was to be uprated. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had agreed that the money was available. I am glad to say that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is still providing money for uprating in future years. Therefore, it is not just that the economy is in a strong enough condition to bear this, but that the money has been specifically allocated by the Treasury for that purpose, which makes it all the more sad that it should not be used for that.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security on the Front Bench. Will he tell us how much, net, will actually be saved by the decision not to uprate child benefit, especially bearing in mind the significant point that an increase in child benefit would have the advantage of taking out of family credit some of those now receiving it? Those people would then move above the level of means-tested benefits. I wonder whether that factor has been allowed for when calculating the savings to be achieved by not uprating child benefit.

The article by Hermione Parker in today's *The Times* has already been mentioned. I must say that that was a brilliant statement about the weakness of means-tested benefit. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will think about it carefully. What I thought was especially formidable in her article was the way in which she stressed that the more we rely on means-tested benefits, the more we shall increase the culture of dependency, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and others have talked about recently.

There is no doubt that it is the means-tested benefit, much more than the universal benefit, which brings about dependency and, of course, brings about, in conjunction with it, a disincentive to move on to paid employment or to better one's income. That is a serious drawback of all the means-tested benefits. I know that the Government have tried to reduce this in some respects by tapering, and they have had some success. However, there are other parts of the social security system where the incentive for increasing one's income by going out to work, if looked at in hard practical terms, is small indeed.

I do not deny that the problem of dependency exists. It is right that my hon. Friend should focus on that, but I strongly believe that the answer that is being put forward of constant recourse to targeting and means-tested benefit is not meeting the problem.

I have already said that I do not intend to deploy the argument for child benefit at length. We have heard already today that there is a take-up problem with family credit. I believe that the figures for family credit must be considered depressing and, of course, there is also the problem of incentives, to which I have referred. I simply want to stress that, as a country and as a party, we need to work hard to find a family policy that is relevant to current needs. If we look back at the figures of 30 years ago, we see that about half of the poverty was to be found among the old. Happily, that figure is now down to about a quarter, which is a great advance. The substantial advance in the position of old people is entirely good and is due to different factors, including, of course, the spread of second pensions. Although I do not deny that there is poverty among many old people, the overall picture for them is better.

When we think about poverty and hardship today, we must consider especially the people who are trying to bring up young children in circumstances that are often difficult. I, and I suspect a number of other hon. Members, will say that the peculiar factor that has deteriorated especially during the last decade or two has been the enormous increase in family breakdown. In my surgery, I am constantly struck by the way in which in earlier times it was really quite unusual for housing problems to be essentially a product of divorce or of one-parent families. Now, over and over again, that is the factor causing the tough social difficulties. I believe that that factor has a great relevance to child benefit, because it appears that women, especially, who are trying to bring up children in difficult circumstances, often against a very rough background in a harsh great city, are the people whom we should be considering.

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

Although I acknowledge that family credit and income support are useful and that the increases in such benefits are valuable to those who receive them, I nevertheless believe strongly that the continuity of child benefit—the fact that one knows when one will receive it without any means test—gives parents bringing up children the kind of confidence that very many of them badly need. I would apply that not only to the poorest and those facing the toughest of all situations, but to many others, especially those who are not quite poor—those who, relatively speaking, if one looks at the total income of the parents, should be not at all badly off. If we are thinking about a genuine family policy designed to meet the difficulties that people face in the circumstances of which I have spoken, child benefit should form an important part of that.

Of course, there is no point in saying that child benefit should be an important part of that policy unless one is prepared to go on to say that, for it to be meaningful, it must be uprated. It cannot be allowed to be frozen and to wither away.

I hope that, when the Minister said that there has been no long-term decision about the uprating of child benefit, he meant it. I am sure that he did, because he is an honourable man. I hope that the Government will take on board the fact that they have the resources allocated to uprate child benefit in the future and that the social and political arguments and arguments of straight Conservative philosophy all point in that direction.

I recall that last time I spoke I was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) who said that it was absurd to give all this money to people who could perfectly well afford to do without it, and what would the old people say about what was going on. I do not believe that most of the old people begrudge the existence of child benefit, any more than those who receive child benefit begrudge the fact that very prosperous old people, perhaps, receive the £10 Christmas bonus and can travel at very low rates on the London public transport system. I do not believe that that is the prevailing mood in this country. People by and large are reasonable and civilised.

I am glad that the window has not been completely shut, but I believe that it is of great importance that we should uprate child benefit. We should consider it a major instrument of social policy. I hope that the Government will announce shortly that they aim to uprate it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I appreciate the fact that the right hon. Gentleman was able to say what he had to say within 10 minutes. Many hon. Members wish to speak and I hope that they will follow the right hon. Gentleman's example.

5.48 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I shall do that if I can, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to make only two points. I should first like to add to what my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said about Labour's record on pensions. I shall comment on that, because the Government say that they are so interested in targeting. They tried to question my hon. Friend's figures about the 20 per cent. increase in real terms for pensioners. I am making a distinction between the increase in pensions and the increase in living standards.

If we consider the most vulnerable group of pensioners —those who during the period of the last Labour Government and this Government have been completely dependent on the state pension—we see that their living standards rose in real terms by 20 per cent. under Labour. Therefore, I should have thought that a Government who tell us that they are interested in targeting would have paid some attention to that fact and drawn the attention of the House to Labour's record. The Conservative Government's record stands up to scrutiny, but they have a largely untargeted programme wherein the largest gains in living standards among pensioners have gone to the richest. That is a strange form of targeting from the Government.

Secondly, I welcome the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston that the House will be given a clear opportunity early in the new year to vote on child benefit. My hon. Friend deployed the case against the Secretary of State, who seems to have an unhealthy prejudice against child benefit. The right hon. Gentleman does not say to the House, "under my stewardship, child benefit will not be increased," because he knows that, if he did, in no time some of us would have him in the courts. He has a duty each year to decide whether child benefit should be increased, given the changes in circumstances during the previous 12 months. Legally, he cannot make such a statement, but he shows in everything else that he says and in every bit of body language at the Dispatch Box that he is intent on not increasing child benefit. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston. We shall have an opportunity early in January to deploy, and win, the argument against Conservative Back Benchers.

If we have done our work and try to get Conservative Members to join us in the Division Lobby, and we fail, and if my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston is right about the prejudice on the Treasury Bench against increasing child benefit, we must accept the challenge. The Opposition and pressure groups outside must accept that challenge, or we will be presented every year with opportunities in the uprating or on Opposition Supply days to make a fuss, but it will only be gesture politics. We will know that the Government have no intention of moving down the line that we want. If we are not in business to perpetuate gesture politics, after January's debate we shall have to come up with new ideas and statements which do not just recite the old phrases that please us and some Conservative Members but take the argument into the enemy camp and challenge the enemy on its assumptions. If we fail to win the vote in January, we must start putting forward alternatives. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston referred to the wall of resistance, which we will meet, to increasing child benefit.

As well as keeping child benefit, we should consider challenging the Government to reintroduce child tax allowances. People may say that that is an inconsistent position for me to hold. I favour abolishing all tax allowances and reducing the standard rate to between 12p and 15p in the pound. I am not, however, above a political or tactical manoeuvre, to score points and have a conversation with the electorate and, if successful, to ensure that the funds that exist in the form of a child tax allowance can be put back into the child benefit scheme by a future Government three years hence.

Some will say that the group to lose out will be some of the most vulnerable, those who earn their poverty and do not earn enough to pay tax. It would not be impossible, however, to have a child tax scheme that allowed such people to opt for a cash payment. The majority of families could claim the tax allowance against their tax liabilities and those below the tax threshold could pick up a cash payment, just as happens with child benefit. I again emphasise that I am talking not about phasing out child benefit but about running the two schemes together. We shall face that challenge as an Opposition if we are serious about using the next three years to have a conversation with the electorate so that they trust us with the reins of Government after the votes are counted and do not return us yet again to the Opposition Benches.

As it will be a challenge to us, so, too, will it be a challenge to the pressure groups. We cannot expect them to trot out the same old arguments as though we live in the 1960s and 1970s. If my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston is right, as I believe he is, in describing the prejudice of the Secretary of State and other members of the Government against increasing child benefit during the life of this Government, they, too, need to put their thinking caps on and come up with proposals, which the Government may implement, which safeguard the child benefit scheme.

If there is one lesson that I have learnt from watching the Government's behaviour over 10 years it is that few Opposition Members can dislodge the Prime Minister when she has an idea in her head, although sometimes Conservative Members and supporters can do so. But when the Prime Minister puts the ball down, we can pick it up and run in a slightly different direction from the one she expected. If we are not to have three years of these sorts of debates, three years of exciting ourselves and rehearsing the same old arguments and three years of defeats for our constituents and poor families, we need not look over our shoulders, worrying about what the pressure groups will think. We must seek room to manoeuvre—the room allowed for us by the Government—and to secure victories.

I could not be more pleased not only by the quality of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston but by the promise of a debate in the new year and the chance to put hon. Members "on the spot", if I may put it as gently as that. All of us must learn from the vote. If it goes our way, the Government will lose. If it does not, the challenge will be presented to all of us on the Opposition Benches and to pressure groups: what will we do for the remaining three years of the Parliament? Will we trot out the same old case, or will we think of something new so that, at the end of that period, we shall have delivered something to the people whom we represent?

5.57 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I should like to make a few comments on hon. Members' observations on child benefit. We should emphasise that it remains a universal benefit to all families and will have to be reviewed in the autumn, as my hon. Friend the Minister said. My hon. Friend said also that there should be a judicious mixture of universal and means-tested benefits. We need to remind ourselves that, if the benefit were uprated in line with inflation, it would cost £200 million. We should ask ourselves whether it is right to continue to uprate the benefit while paying it to all families, including the super-rich, whom the Opposition have mentioned repeatedly in the context of tax cuts in last year's Budget.

Of course child benefit is much valued and needed by many families, but hon. Members must recall some of the media publicity which was given at the time of the last debate on this subject, about a month ago, to those receiving the benefit who said that they did not need it, that they were spending their benefit on antiques, ski holidays or gymkhana fees. Of course, those are anecdotal examples and represent a minority, but surely they mean that we should look at the system again. The debate after the recess will perhaps give such an opportunity.

Before the introduction of family credit, child benefit was undoubtedly a lifeline for the poorest families and a useful addition to the family budget for those on middle incomes. But this debate is taking place when the average take-home pay of a man with two children has increased by 30 per cent. since 1979 and when prosperity levels have been transformed in areas with good employment prospects. Given that fact, there is more than ever a sound reason for giving most help to families with children who need it most, via income support and family credit.

Next year, in addition to the £5 billion that will go to the neediest families, there will be an extra £70 million through, for example, a combination of child allowance, income support and housing benefit, and also help through the exceptional cold weather payment scheme which will be extended to families with children between the ages of two and five. That will help a further 500,000 families.

But the debate is not about whether we should have child benefit or give help to the poorest families through income support and family credit, but rather whether in today's circumstances of increasing prosperity in large areas of the country we should continue to pay a universal perk to all families, even the super-rich. That debate should be pursued.

The "save child benefit" lobby claims, validly in my opinion, that the sheer permanence and ease of child benefit particularly helps the poorest families, a feature of whose lives is fluctuation of income and circumstances week by week. There are still far too many delays, errors and sheer complexities in claiming income support and family credit, and their take-up, although much improved, needs to be improved still further. I hope that the computer programme outlined yesterday and now well under way, and the Department's efforts to improve the take-up of all benefits, will improve the benefit system's responsiveness to families in real need.

A recent publication of tables showing the interaction of tax and benefits illustrates that the systems can no longer interact to create a combined deduction of 100 per cent. or more, which was clearly a ridiculous situation. But, as has already been said, attention must now be paid to the fact that, as the tables also illustrate, crossing a national insurance contribution threshold can sometimes mean the same thing.

Finally, it must be obvious to everyone that the real solution for families with children must lie in the continued strengthening of the country's economy and, in particular for families with children, the continued reduction in unemployment rates. We have seen recently that we have the lowest unemployment figures in the EEC. That strengthening of the economy, together with the judicious

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

mixture mentioned by my hon. Friend the Minister, should provide the right sort of help to families who need it.

6.2 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate. Since being elected to the House I have spent some time taking part in debates such as this, but this one has a slightly different flavour from the others. The difficulty about debating important subjects based on uprating statements is that we tend to be bedevilled by technical detail and quantities of money that may or may not be needed. Therefore, it is not easy to discuss some of the interesting points that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) raised. I have always felt that to be a matter for regret.

I greeted with enthusiasm the announcement of a debate made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). He made an expert and interesting speech which will repay study when it is printed in the *Official Report*. I exhort the hon. Gentleman to make the motion that he plans to put before the House as broad as possible to enable us to have a wide-ranging debate. There is a need for that, although I understand that the hon. Gentleman's main intention is to try to get his hands on the vote for child benefit and in that regard, too, I would encourage him. One thing that has come out of today's debate—it does not always happen—is that there is a cross-current of opinion between the Government and Opposition Benches on the future of child benefit and whether the argument about universality versus selectivity has been won or lost in the Government's mind.

I hope that the Government will say something about what is in their mind for child benefit in the longer term. I too know, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead said, that there are legal difficulties because the Secretary of State has a statutory duty to look at the situation afresh each year, making it difficult for him to make blanket political statements in the House. But it also makes it fiendishly difficult for those of us who take a genuine interest in some of these detailed questions to make assumptions and judgments about what is in the Government's mind for the future. I hope that the Government will find some way of telling us whether it is their genuine intention to freeze child benefit or universal benefits generally for the foreseeable future. It is right that we should know that. However, I fully understand the difficulties that the Secretary of State may have in being as explicit.

The whole question of universality has gone by default, and that is a mistake on the part of Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Livingston said that if these benefits had been treated as child allowances they would have suffered an entirely different fate at the hands of this Administration, and that is true. Selectivity inevitably leads to the familiar and well-rehearsed problems of poverty traps, means testing and take-up rates. Worrying developments have accrued from the new system introduced in April. Some of the reforms have simplified the system—one of the Government's key objectives. The social security staff who operate the system are finding it easier. It must also be recognised that some of the new levels for child credits, income support and the family credit system are making an impact once the problem of take-up is resolved. It would be foolish not to recognise that. However, there are severe and substantial problems in some other areas which relate directly to the problem of selective benefits in general.

We often forget that one of the principal reasons for the original Beveridge report was the importance of the horizontal distribution of income throughout the lifetime of a Parliament. There were periods that could easily be marked as times when extra finance was necessary. Starting a family is an obvious one to choose. Therefore, the Beveridge plan was an attempt to try to redistribute money along those lines. That is an incontrovertible argument which is as true now as it was then. That should be borne in mind in addition to all the other arguments about cheaper administration.

If we are to start on a great debate about the relative merits of universality versus selectivity, the Government will have to take into account other available tax reliefs such as mortgage tax relief and pension tax relief, because they are an important part of the argument. There is a value in universal benefits that goes beyond their financial impact and that is part of the social cement; part of the collective provision that we all accept in other areas which prevents social division. There is a host of arguments that we should have an opportunity to deploy in the House in their wider context, not necessarily within the technical detail of an uprating statement such as we are debating tonight.

Today's debate has been focused, understandably, on child benefit, but I am also worried about the position of some pensioners. There has been the usual barney about whether the last Labour Government paid more or less than what the present Government are paying. That is all very instructive, but I have heard it before. Leaving aside such banter, I believe that there are substantial problems for pensioners who rely exclusively on state pensions, particularly the more elderly. The Government have recognised those problems and have put £200 million into the system. Although I do not think that that goes far enough, it is none the less a step in the right direction, and as such I welcome it.

If the Government are to tell us their view on the continued universality of child benefit, they will also have to address the question of the general increase in wealth. We need to bridge a gap, particularly for those exclusively on state pensions. Of course we need to price-protect the increases, but we must protect a particular generation of pensioners before people can start claiming state earnings-related pension in 20, 30 or perhaps 40 years' time. I shall be all right when I retire, but the present generation of pensioners are suffering and will continue to suffer. Their suffering must indeed worsen in relative terms, because, if the Government and the Chancellor are to be believed, the country's general wealth is increasing quite fast. Pensions are being increased in accordance with the increase in prices, but that does not give pensioners the opportunity to share in the general increase in wealth that is available to everyone who happens to be in work rather than relying on a price-protected benefit.

Having announced a £200 million increase, the Government will be forced to come back year in, year out to deal with the problem—which I accept will disappear when SERPS comes into effect substantially. The problem should not be minimised. It does the Government no good to beat their chests about what they are achieving for the

average income of the average pensioner. It is cold kale to pensioners in my constituency and others, who are at the sharp end and are forced to live on a state retirement pension and nothing else, to hear what the average income increase has been over the past five or 10 years.

The social security advisory committee has recognised the problem and I support its views. I do not go so far as to say that £5 billion is needed so that we can put all the money back into pensioners' pockets immediately; that would be an unreasonable request. From time to time, however, in appropriate circumstances, there must be an uprating that goes beyond what the retail prices index demands. Otherwise, pensioners will find themselves inexorably losing out on the country's general wealth creation.

I saw a worrying leader in *The Guardian* recently—around the end of last month—which mentioned a sudden inexplicable drop in the number of people claiming benefits. Have the Government any explanation? They may say that the unemployment figures have fallen. Of course we cannot obtain as detailed and accurate statistics as we used to under the old 1983 system of data and statistics provision.

I am also worried about staff requirements. I am worried by some of the conclusions of the Moodie report, by what the National Audit Office has said about the conditions in which staff work and by the comments of the Public Accounts Committee in its statement last month. Nevertheless, if the motion is pushed to the vote, which I understand is now less likely to happen, I shall support the Government as far as they go—on the strict understanding that it is only because they have given more money to elderly pensioners.

6.14 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I pay tribute to the thoughtful comments of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who spoke with care and compassion—as have other hon. Members on both sides of the House.

So far we have not heard much about how the massive increase in Government expenditure associated with the upratings is to be paid for. I understand that £1 in every £3 of the Government's expenditure goes into social security; when the Labour party was in government the proportion was £1 in £4. We have heard the Government criticised for not spending the substantial revenues that the Chancellor appears to have at his disposal on matters identified by Opposition Members. The Chancellor has, I think quite cleverly, pointed to a strategy of repaying debt, reducing the cost of servicing that debt and thus enabling us to fund social security expenditure prudently.

Some 25 per cent. of my constituents are pensioners, and they warmly welcome the upgrading. But, while everyone clearly benefits, some people are left in some form of need. I welcome one part of the upgrading statement, and some comments by Ministers have been important in underpinning the position of the basic state pension in our benefit structure. There is a view that as people have more occupational pensions the state pension becomes less important, but I believe that the state pension is crucial because it is ultimately an insurance against life's chances. Someone in a good job may be ill and thus unable to realise his full income potential. His occupational pension would necessarily fall away, but the state pension would be there to guarantee at least some income for working people who run into difficulties.

We have heard comments about income support and family credit, and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned the Beveridge report. Beveridge stated:

> "The third principle is that social security must be achieved by co-operation between the State and the individual. The State should offer security for service and contribution. The State in organising security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility".

The report spoke of "encouragement for voluntary action", and the uprating of family credit plays up to that. It means that families will be supported to the tune of some £5 billion a year. A family earning up to £9,000, with two children aged 12 and 14, could receive help via family credit.

As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire pointed out, we have heard a certain amount of banter across the House about who did what. Pensioners, however, greatly value the present Government's contribution in respect of inflation. They know that an uprating of 5·9 per cent. will be, by and large, the rate of inflation over the 12-month period. What the Opposition's argument has missed out is the dynamic effect. It is all right uprating and catching up in 12 months' time, but when the Labour party was in government and inflation reached double figures there was no catching up in the intermediate period. That was when the real value of pensions disappeared. Labour also contributed to a reduction in pensioner income by changing from the historical to the forecast method. But I do not want to get stuck in too sterile an argument. Some wider issues to do with pensions can also be raised.

We should remember that the Government have a large commitment to those who are coming into pension—people who contribute to their occupational pensions and are coming up to retirement. About £10·7 billion worth of tax-based assistance goes to people who are saving through pensions. So when we discuss the Government's commitment to pensioners we cannot ignore that other side of the equation.

I want to talk for a moment about pensioners' incomes. It is interesting to discover that 150,000 married couples and single pensioners over the age of 65 pay higher rate tax, so that sort of income has spread a long way up the spectrum.

Mr. Kirkwood: They are only a tiny minority.

Mr. Jack: Perhaps, but about 50,000 of them pay capital gains tax. They represent the leading edge of the spread of wealth. However, I take the Opposition's point that, to counter-balance this, 1·9 million pensioner tax units have occupational pensions of less than £1,000 a year. That shows that there is a management problem and that, welcome as the uprating of pensions is, we have to manage the gap between some who depend only on state benefits and others who are extremely well off. I would encourage debate about that.

My mother, who lives in a rest home, sold her house and lives on the income she receives and on attendance allowance. In spite of all that, she ends up paying tax. She receives a small occupational pension of £1,500 from my father's estate, and ends up paying £9·95 a month in tax. Although my hon. Friend the Minister is not responsible

[Mr. Jack]

for Treasury matters, I implore him to suggest to the Treasury that we may be able to help pensioners by removing them from the tax bracket in which they now find themselves. That is rather a sore point.

My hon. Friend the Minister has shown compassion in his dealings. I know from my dealings with pensioners that one of the problems with the uprating statement is that it cannot, by definition, deal with some anomalies that have arisen because of the changes in social security arrangements. I shall not go though a litany of cases, but I ask my hon. Friend to honour his pledge in the foreseeable future and to knock off some of the rough edges that have become evident as we have become used to the new system. Some pensioners require help; others have considerable wealth at their disposal.

I want to put the uprating into another context. We must never forget that people who work pay for those benefits. Today, 2·3 national insurance payers per beneficiary bear the burden of our social security system; by the end of the century that will have dropped to 1·8. The Government are right to get to grips with the problem of what we spend this large sum on, so that the burden may be properly borne in future.

Much as I support my hon. Friend's announcement about Motability, and much as I support the enormous amount of work that he has done to help the disabled, my plea is that he will examine the cases put forward to him which involve the relationship between income support, the transitional arrangements and the other benefits that go with them. I do not want my hon. Friend's fine record to be marred by a series of cases of people losing benefit because of changes in other benefits.

The benefit uprating statement is to be warmly welcomed. It clearly shows the Government's commitment to helping those in need, and it forms a useful platform from which to go forward and make further improvements.

6.25 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) diplomatically said that the Minister had a fine record, but asked him to look at the problems of the disabled. I am glad that plea was made. The hon. Member for Fylde mentioned rough edges; disabled people get a rough deal from this uprating. It is deplorable that the Government should add to the heavy burdens of disabled people by today's tardy uprating.

Income is a major problem for almost all disabled people. I suggest three requirements. First, basic needs should be met, regardless of what else happens, such as changes in a person's disability or in the Government. Secondly, additional costs should be covered. Thirdly, there should be a basic income good enough to live on.

The Government have failed disabled people on those three counts and the uprating has done nothing to change that. Social security benefits are crucial for disabled people. Most of them have been affected by the 1988 changes. The citizens advice bureaux surveyed people on social security and concluded:

"The overriding impression of the April changeover has been the distress and lack of understanding caused by administrative confusion and poor communications. Not all those surveyed were disabled, but it is very likely that the elderly disabled were amongst those most distressed and finding greatest difficulty understanding the blows that were hitting them."

That is a strong statement.

The nature of the transitional payment has not been fully understood by some disabled people. Many of them do not realise that a transitional payment means that they will get no increases in 1989 to cope with inflation. Some of them will not receive increases for many years. The most severely disabled people face a period of declining real income—a terrible thing.

A major disaster for disabled people has been the replacement of the familiar, understood and targeted additional cost payment with the simplistic disability premiums. Disability is an individual matter and the additional cost payments were related to individuals, which was important. Premiums are group payments. The Government were warned by my right hon. and hon. Friends that these payments would be inappropriate, and so they are. They are based on averages and so cannot be adequate for the worst cases.

The disastrous consequences were concealed last April by the provision of transitional payments; but unfortunately for the Government, and even more unfortunately for severely disabled people, sharp increases in mortgage payments have shredded these transitional payments coverages. A glaring example is that of the disabled owner-occupier with a rising mortgage bill who has received no additional cash in hand to pay for it. All that has happened is that the part of the money labelled income support has increased and the part labelled transitional payment has decreased.

Disabled people with rising rents do not have their transitional payments squeezed and that is as it should be. The treatment of owner-occupiers is anomalous and unjustified and it is hitting and hurting. The Minister must bear responsibility for that.

Ministers have claimed that many people are better off as a result of the 1988 changes. That was only because of the transitional payments and there is no doubt that those have turned out to be a Government confidence trick. Regulation after regulation has meant blow after blow for those people. A few days in hospital or a temporary change of circumstances can lead to the end of transitional protection. Whatever the change, it makes disabled people worse off and none of the changes can make the disabled man or woman better off. For disabled people, there is no Santa Claus in the Government and the House should recognise that.

The issue of disability costs is a nightmare for disabled people and a challenge to the Government, but before the Government act they must look again at the survey findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys which show that additional costs are £6·10 a week on average. That figure must not be allowed to become part of the accepted disablement fact file. The Disablement Income Group was astonished by that and the detailed critique that it produced must be taken into account by Ministers.

The Government—and the Minister of State in particular—while accepting that 6 million people have been identified as disabled, have tried to whitewash the importance of that by saying that a significant proportion are only slightly disabled. The Minister said that at his press conference. If the Minister is right, he must acknowledge that the low figure of £6·10 for average

additional costs arises because those who were surveyed include many slightly disabled people with low additional costs. The logic is impeccable. Severely disabled people who have higher additional costs—in some cases, very high additional costs—are not covered. The Minister must accept that.

In his speech this afternoon, the Minister praised the independent living fund. Surely he blushed when he did that because the figures reveal the reality. Only £125,000 has been paid to a mere 355 people. On my estimate, that is about £353 each on average. Five hundred and seventy-four people have been rejected and 1,574 people are being considered. The social security changes took place nine months ago. As a safety net, the independent living fund is too late and too full of holes.

What matters basically to disabled people is how much money there is for normal living and the OPCS survey revealed just how badly disabled people fare. In 1985, when the survey was carried out, the average non-pensioner disabled couple, after allowing for additional costs, received just £91·70 a week compared with £136·50 for a non-disabled couple of working age. For pensioners, the gap was smaller, but still significant. It was £83·70 compared with £93·70 and, at that level, £10 is a fortune. Those stark figures reveal the tough, harsh and hard life led by disabled people, with their reliance on social security. The Government have failed to honour their promises and have failed disabled people. It is a sad, sorry and shameful record.

6.34 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): I am sure that all hon. Members, irrespective of party, are anxious to do their best for pensioners in need. They are, after all, the generation that saw us through the second world war and preserved our national freedom. It is right that we should make proper provision for those pensioners who need support. How best to do that? The Opposition call for more—and they call for more across the board. It is far more difficult and far more complicated than that.

I am inclined to think that my hon. Friend the Minister was right when, in his opening speech, he called for a judicious mix of across-the-board benefits and selective, targeted benefits. I have no doubt that it is right for the Government to maintain the basic state retirement pension in real terms. The question is, what should be done with the extra money beyond that which becomes available? If the extra money is squandered in across-the-board benefits, it means that less money is available for those who really need it.

Pensioners are a disparate lot. Sadly, there are those who are in real need, but there are also many well-to-do pensioners. There are many who have paid off their mortgages, who have received substantial lump sums on retirement and who benefit from quite substantial occupational pension schemes. If we pay across-the-board benefits, the inevitable effect will be that money and benefits go to many who do not really need them. It follows that less is available to help those who really do need them. I have no doubt that the extra money should be targeted, but I agree that targeting is not as easy as it seems at first sight. There are dangers and difficulties about targeting, which have to be avoided.

Take-up is one such difficulty. Family credit is an example of that, because far too few families are taking advantage of family credit, which was introduced especially to assist them. The other major disadvantage, apart from take-up failure, is the danger of creating a poverty trap.

A more constructive approach should be adopted to see how far those two difficulties can be overcome. We should be looking for a way of targeting benefits and, at the same time, overcoming the difficulties and drawbacks. Leaving aside the argument about targeted benefits as opposed to universal benefits, far more time should be spent on the task of ensuring a better take-up of targeted benefits and on introducing further improvements in the taper system, which has proved so useful in overcoming the poverty trap. We should approach the matter along those constructive lines.

Many Opposition Members—I exempt specifically the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field)—see the matter in black and white. They believe that universal benefits are the only way forward and they call for more without realising that there is more to it than that. The Government who do the best for pensioners will be the Government who keep inflation under control and who generate the prosperity and economic growth to provide the wherewithal to improve pensions. The Government will do best for pensioners if they give extra benefits to the pensioners who need them most.

6.39 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): We should have had a roll of drums when the Minister rose to speak today. Increasingly, the uprating statement serves the function of a magician's cloak. It is flashed before our wondering eyes, as the Minister makes dramatic gestures and mumbles incomprehensible incantations in which a few mystical words can be heard—words like "targeting" and "dependency". His Back Benchers, who know precisely when to cheer, although perhaps not precisely what to cheer, give tongue. Then, with a confident smirk, the magician finally whisks away his cloak. The stage is empty; the great illusion is complete; the welfare state has quietly disappeared and the amazed members of the audience turn to each other and say, "How did he do that? I did not see it go." [HON. MEMBERS: "Here he comes."] I welcome the Minister of State back to the Chamber.

We are here to puncture the great illusion and to tell the House how the trick is done, and before it is completely finished. Like many tricks, it requires the audience to suspend their disbelief. Let us begin by dispensing with the idea that we misunderstand the extent of the Government's generosity. We understand it only too well. We understand that the Government follow assiduously in the footsteps of their famous supporter, Jeffrey Archer, who wrote "Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less."

The Government who tell us that they have lavished £1,800 million on increased national insurance benefits —although only £1,500 million is in increased benefits and not for increased numbers—are the same Government who made a profit last year of £3,000 million from national insurance contributions. That was money raised in contributions—some hon. Members have drawn attention to this—over and above that paid out in increased national insurance benefit. Twice as much money went to the Treasury as went into the pockets of pensioners, widows or the sick. Moreover, the same Government will clear a further £2,000 million and more this year from increased

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

national insurance contributions—almost £1,000 million more than they will pay in national insurance benefit increases. That is quite apart from the running total of about £6,000 million that they clear every year because of the break of the link between pensions and earnings.

We are talking not about an increase but about a redistribution of benefits, and many of those benefits are frozen. Sadly, the majority of Conservative Back Benchers —there are some most honourable exceptions—applaud the second freezing of child benefit in cash terms because the benefit goes to the wealthy. We know, however, that they are the same Back Benchers who cheered and waved their Order Papers when the Government gave £4,000 million almost exclusively to the wealthy in the Budget.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) referred to the extra £200 million on child benefit as a universal perk. With great respect, I remind her that she and her hon. Friends voted for inheritance reliefs in the Budget for just 2,000 already wealthy people. That was not a universal perk but it was a perk that was rather well worth having. Does the hon. Lady really believe that that money is better going to those 2,000 people than to 12 million children? Today, I read in the press that top management salaries have increased by 30 per cent. this year. Will those who object so strongly to such people getting £7·25 a week in child benefit have anything to say about them getting £500 a week in extra salary? I very much doubt it.

I have not the slightest doubt that the Conservative Back Benchers who call for the means-testing of child benefit would applaud means-testing of the basic pension, the Christmas bonus or any other benefits for pensioners, with the same enthusiasm and for the same reasons. They object to universal benefits, clawed back in tax from those who do not need them, because they tie up resources which, freed to pay for tax cuts, could be targeted exclusively to their friends and supporters.

In July 1980 we were told the Government intended to uprate child benefit each year to maintain its value. In 1984, the then Secretary of State drew attention to what he called the need for "rough equality of treatment" between tax allowances and child benefit. It has become very rough indeed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) pointed out, child benefit has fallen by 7 per cent. in real terms since 1979, while tax allowances have substantially increased.

Child benefit remains the best way of lifting families out of the poverty trap. Increases in means-tested benefits trap more families into dependence. As always, when cuts are made, it is the poor who get £70 million of the savings in child benefit while the Treasury pockets twice as much.

Child benefit is not the only indicator of the Government's long-term intentions. The Chancellor was kind enough a few weeks ago to draw our attention to the difference between pledged benefits, which are at least frozen in real terms and stand still in line with prices, and unpledged benefits which, like child benefit, can be frozen in cash terms without changing the law.

The widows' payment is now worth almost £600 less than the uprated benefit it replaced, and it is frozen again this year. The lone parent premium on housing benefit is frozen. The earnings rule for pensioners—I am sure that Conservative Members remember that the Government were going to abolish it in 1979—has been frozen. The earnings rule for the spouses of the retired or disabled has been frozen as has that for carers. The occupational pension level that wipes out entitlements to unemployment benefit has been frozen. The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) mentioned the need for incentives, but all the earnings disregards have been frozen.

The maternity payment from the social fund, specifically targeted only on the poorest mothers, was first cut in half, as compared with what the poorest used to get, and was then frozen at £85—£85 to meet the whole cost of having a child, for which two years ago a mother in the same circumstances could have obtained perhaps £180. Not a penny more is available in supplementary grants. Most of the benefits that I have cited are not just frozen this year; they have been frozen for five years or so, representing a steady erosion of their value.

The poorest unemployed—those on income support —have had their living standards cut. That is especially true of those who are childless because their basic benefit has not even been increased in line with inflation, as the Government admit.

Those whom the law does protect—the pensioners—have had their staple income frozen in real terms. They are standing still at best, while those in work forge ahead. The House should consider the long-term impact of that standstill, and I pay tribute to those Conservative Members who have begun to do that. If the pension of 1948 had been uprated only in line with prices, the basic pension today would be just over £18 a week for a single person and nearly £33 a week for a couple. That is less than half the basic pension today, and 2·3 million get only that basic pension. On average, a single pensioner spends about £15 a week on food—hardly an extravagant figure—so pensioners would have about £3 left for fuel and all other expenses if previous Governments had pursued this Government's policy.

We know that the Government prefer to talk only about pensioners with extra savings or extra pensions, which we welcome and applaud and which we did much to foster. But the Government are steadily whittling away the foundation of retirement incomes—the basic pension. The Minister accused us of being obsessed with the basic pension, but it is the Government who described the basic pension as the "main source" of income for most pensioners. The 30, 40 and 50-year-olds who put money aside for extra independence in retirement are putting back what the Government are taking away. They are running to stand still.

We can guess what the Minister will say: he will say that we exaggerate. He will say that we are mean-spirited not to welcome the extra money going into benefit. He will gloss over, if he mentions at all, the fact that the Treasury pocketed twice as much in national insurance contributions as the Government paid out in increased national insurance benefits.

As we are talking about the Government's generosity, let me remind the Minister of an answer that he gave me on 15 November. I asked him just how much of the real increase in social security expenditure since 1979 was due to benefit upratings in excess of pricing increases. Of the nine years, he was able to identify three in which such increases had taken place. In 1980, supplementary benefit child scale rates were amalgamated and the uprating exceeded inflation by about £3—a sum that I accept was worth having. In 1981, mobility allowance went up by a

princely 70p and in 1983 one-parent benefit went up by 25 whole pence more than the increase in prices. The Government have increased benefits by more than the rise in prices only three times in nine years.

I have no doubt that the Under-Secretary of State will tell us that, although the Chancellor of the Exchequer claims that we are more prosperous and successful than ever, that prosperity cannot be shared with pensioners, the low-paid, widows, the sick and the unemployed without it being imperilled. He will deploy all the clever phrases devised by a Government who can cut housing benefit transitional protection of £2·50 by £2 and call it an erosion factor. But he and the Government know that this uprating statement is just another swirl of the magician's cloak and that backstage the demolition men are hard at work.

6.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): This combined debate on uprating and re-rating has enabled hon. Members to raise a wide range of issues, but it has left me little time to respond to each point.

Before I mention some of the general points that have been made I wish to re-emphasise the Government's impressive record. Since 1979 spending on social security has risen by one third in real terms. That is not magic, as the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) described it. She wrapped herself in the magician's cloak instead of examining the figures in detail. That figure includes a 24 per cent. increase in spending on the elderly and a 90 per cent. increase in spending on the sick and disabled. Of course, a considerable amount of that is explained by the fact that the benefits go wider—more people are receiving them. But they must be paid for, and they can be paid for only by a successful economy. Those impressive figures mean that more people are being helped, and many of them are being helped much more than they were under the Labour Government. Spending next year will increase by 7 per cent. over this year, so we are continuing to find additional resources. But we are determined to ensure that the extra money goes where it is most needed.

We have honoured our pledge to maintain the real value of pensions. I acknowledge that we have not linked them with earnings, as the Labour Government did, but on two out of five occasions the Labour Government fell down on their pledge. We want to make a pledge that we can honour. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was right to say that there was a 20 per cent. increase in state pensions under the Labour Government—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I hope that he and his colleagues who are cheering will be equally frank and admit that under this Government pensioner incomes have increased by 23 per cent.—an increase of 3 per cent. a year since 1979 as compared with 0·6 per cent. a year under Labour. It is clear from the figures that it is much better to be a pensioner under this Government than it was under the Labour Government.

Furthermore, there are fewer pensioners on low incomes. In 1979, 38 per cent. of pensioners were in the bottom 20 per cent. of incomes. By 1986, the proportion had dropped to 24 per cent. A statistic that will interest the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is that for pensioners' incomes compared with average earnings. In 1974, the figure was 55 per cent., in 1979 it had dropped to 53 per cent. and in 1986 it rose to 60 per cent.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister give figures for the proportion of average male earnings for those years?

Mr. Lloyd: That was the figure for average earnings. The Conservative Government have introduced the pensioner premium on income support, and next October we shall add £2·50 and £3·50 to the pensioner premium for older pensioners and the disabled.

The Opposition pour scorn on family credit as a targeted benefit, but their scorn is somewhat premature. Although the case load—260,000—is less than we had forecast, spending is up to forecast. We had intended to spend about £400 million. It is clear that the benefit is better targeted than we envisaged.

The figures show that the benefit reaches even more of the less well-off than we had hoped. We want to do even better. We are to have a take-up campaign on television because the benefit is not well enough known; it has not had enough time to establish itself fully. It will take a little longer than it should because the Opposition, instead of promoting it, have consistently decried it.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Minister has said it will take a little longer to reach the target. When do the Government expect to hit the target that they promised of 60 per cent. and 470,000 claimants?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot predict the future, but I can tell him that we are on target with the amount of money paid out. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will take pleasure in that. It means that the money is reaching families who need it. I should have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would be sufficiently generous to show some satisfaction at that fact.

The Opposition have worked up considerable indignation about the freezing of child benefit. One would hardly credit it that the Labour Secretary of State who introduced child benefit in 1975, Mrs. Barbara Castle, emphatically did not plan for an annual uprating. She believed that consideration should be given each year to whether the money was best spent in that way or another. That is precisely what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has done. But we have not just left the matter there. We have transferred much of that money to those on lower incomes who need the help.

It is worth putting on record the fact that, on income support, the child rate for those aged under 11 has been increased by 9·3 per cent., for 11 to 15-year-olds by 7·8 per cent. and for 16 and 17-year-olds by 7·2 per cent. On family credit, child payments for under 11-year olds have been increased by 20·7 per cent., for 11 to 15-year-olds by 13·2 per cent. and for 16 to 17-year-olds by 11·2 per cent. That is additional money far above the rate of inflation which goes to the families who need it most. It is churlish of Opposition Members, who jeered the poor targeting of those benefits, not to express some satisfaction that this extra help is going where it is most needed.

Unlike those on income support, people at the family credit level have benefited from the high wage increases and tax reductions of the past year. I am amazed that the Opposition even considered voting against a measure that produces extra help for low-income families so as to enable

[Mr. Lloyd]

45p to be distributed each week to families well up the income scale who have done well from the tax reductions that the Opposition criticised.

There are several more points that I would wish to raise, but clearly there is not time to do so. These upratings bring the social security budget to well over £50 billion. They reflect the success of the Government's economic policies and their determination to use the extra resources that they have generated where they are most needed. We have fulfilled our promises to pensioners and others who receive long-term benefit, and we have also provided extra and welcome help to those families on low incomes. I commend both orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions and Allocation of Contributions) (Re-rating) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to order [16 December], to put forthwith the Question on the remaining motion relating to social security.*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Select Committee on Scottish Affairs

Mr. Speaker: I repeat what I said earlier. I have selected all the amendments on the Order Paper.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the light of the discussions that took place earlier, will you summon to the House the Chairman of the Committee of Selection to tell us whether he expects an early debate on the recommendations? That would help all of us who wish to participate in the debate.

Mr. Speaker: That is not within my authority.

7 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the inability of the Committee of Selection to nominate Members to serve on the Scottish Affairs Committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 104(2); welcomes the continued scrutiny of the Scottish Office by the Committee of Public Accounts, and the extent to which other select committees have been and will continue to be able within their orders of reference to take evidence from the Scottish Office and associated public bodies on matters arising in Scotland, and to report thereon; and notes that other Parliamentary means exist for the consideration of Scottish affairs, including the Scottish Grand Committee, particularly in its consideration of Matters relating to Scotland and Estimates for which the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible.

As the House appreciates, a long and tortuous process has brought us to the motion today. If it is passed, it will endorse the Committee of Selection's view that, despite Standing Order No. 130, there is no generally acceptable basis on which to nominate a Scottish Affairs Select Committee. When we began negotiations through the usual channels about setting up this Select Committee we realised that there could be difficulties. I hoped that the discussions would bring us to a solution. However, the only commonly shared point of view about the Committee is that there should be a debate about it.

The Committee of Selection is formally responsible, under Standing Orders, for acting on behalf of the House in nominating members for all departmental Select Committees. That was a deliberate decision of the House when the departmental Select Committee system was set up in 1979, and it followed a recommendation of the Procedure Committee.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) and his colleagues on the Committee for the way in which they carry out their duties. My hon. Friend may seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, to explain how the Committee set about its task on this occasion.

As the House will recall, the usual channels have also been involved in discussions about the Scottish Affairs Select Committee—not to make nominations, but in support of the Committee of Selection by seeking to find a generally acceptable basis on which names could be put forward. That is what I have been trying to achieve. It was unfortunate, but not unprecedented, that it was not possible to do so. Between 1972 and 1979, the Scottish Affairs Select Committee lapsed after some years of activity. For most of that period the Opposition were in government. They did not set up the Committee, despite the fact that fundamental issues relating to Scotland were being discussed at that time.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On what basis is the Leader of the House saying that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs lapsed? There were two Select Committees, which were not running concurrently from one Session to another. There was one in the 1960s dealing with Scottish steel and one in 1972 and 1973 dealing with Scottish land use. To say that the Committee lapsed is wrong. There were two such Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: No Select Committee on Scottish Affairs was set up between 1972 and 1979.

Given how long the discussions continued, the House will, I hope, find it useful if I remind hon. Members briefly of their course. At the outset, it was agreed through the usual channels that the size of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs should be reduced from the maximum provided for by Standing Orders—from 13 to nine. That was in order to maintain the convention that there should be a Government majority on the Committee and to enable that majority to be made up of hon. Members representing Scottish seats only.

On 12 November last, the Committee of Selection accordingly tabled a motion nominating the Conservative and minor party members on that basis. The names of the Labour Committee members were not available at that stage. They were added on 19 November. The Chairman of the Committee of Selection, my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley, then received a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) saying that he was not willing to serve on the Committee. Standing Order No. 104 says that a Member making a nomination shall try to ascertain whether each Member nominated

"will give his attendance on the committee".

Following receipt of my hon. Friend's letter, the Committee of Selection amended its motion to remove his name, leaving just eight. The choice facing the Committee of Selection was to set up a Committee which did not reflect the Government's majority in the House or to nominate at least one of my hon. Friends representing a non-Scottish seat.

In any event, the Committee agreed a special report on 9 December which said that it found itself unable to nominate a Scottish Affairs Select Committee which in its opinion would have the support of the House and that it proposed to take no further action on the matter unless instructed by the House to do so.

Following a debate on 13 January, a motion to take note of the special report was approved by 198 votes to 160. Only during that debate, particularly during the encouraging and flexible speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), did it become apparent that both sides of the House recognised and accepted the unitary nature of our Parliament and that there might be an agreed basis on which to nominate a Select Committee, the members of which did not represent exclusively Scottish constituencies.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why he argues in that way in respect of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, which is purely investigatory and not part of the legislative process, but accepts exclusively Scottish Members on the Scottish Grand Committee which is part of the legislative process? Are we not simply listening to humbug from the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Wakeham: I am discussing the position as it is. I shall discuss many points during my speech and I hope that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) will understand my position better when I have finished.

I was referring to the flexible speech made by the hon. Member for Garscadden in the debate on 13 January. It seemed that there might be an agreed basis upon which we could nominate a Select Committee, the members of which did not represent exclusively Scottish constituencies. There were further discussions through the usual channels and I wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley on 10 March saying that I believed that progress could be made in setting up the Committee.

Events took a further turn when, on 21 April, my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley replied to me saying that he had reported to the Committee of Selection that he had been unable to find any colleague representing a Scottish constituency who was willing to serve on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. The Committee of Selection had agreed that he should inform me that in its view it was unable to make progress.

Notwithstanding that, I had further discussions with my right hon. and hon. Friends representing Scottish constituencies to find out why they were not prepared to serve and to see whether there might be a way of meeting their concerns. I was told that because of their consistent attendance at Standing Committees considering Scottish legislation, in addition to their other duties in the House, they did not believe that they could give sufficient time to the work of a Select Committee. In the light of that— *[Interruption.]* The House should be reminded of the events.

In the light of that, I considered whether there was any scope for flexibility in the work of the Scottish Standing Committee so that my right hon. and hon. Friends might be readier to undertake Select Committee work. Therefore, I set out a proposal in two parts, which on 19 May, during business questions, I outlined in response to a question from the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

The first part of my proposal was that the Committee should include some Members for English constituencies but that there should also be a place on the Committee for both the Social and Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National party. The second part of my proposal was that there should be greater flexibility over the minimum number of Members for Scottish constituencies who would be required to serve on a Scottish Standing Committee.

I am sorry to say that this two-part proposal was not acceptable to the main Opposition party. After I had held further discussions with my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley, the Committee of Selection agreed on 29 June a further special report. The report said that the Committee had concluded that there was no generally acceptable basis for names to be produced to complete nominations to the Scottish Select Committee.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I remind the Leader of the House that on the morning after the last general election his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland commented on the results in Scotland and said that it would be business as usual; the fact that there were only 10 Conservative Members with Scottish constituencies made no difference. It is quite clear

[Mr. James Wallace]

that this is not business as usual. What has happened? Has the Secretary of State for Scotland been unable to deliver business as usual?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's legislative programme for Scotland is going extremely well. The Scottish Office is performing very well indeed in the interests of Scotland, so it is business as usual.

It will be clear from this account that some of the difficulties have arisen because the positions of various participants in these discussions have changed at different times. I make no complaint about that. Hon. Members are perfectly entitled to change their minds, in the same way as anybody else, but it has meant that the opportunities that may have existed at certain times to set up the Committee have been missed. I regret that, but I accept the position.

The three amendments to the original motion still seek to set up the Select Committee. The essence of both the official Opposition and the Scottish National party amendments is that they call on the Committee of Selection to nominate the Select Committee without giving it any unequivocal guidance on how it should do that. The amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and his colleagues instructs the Committee of Selection to nominate the Select Committee on the basis, roughly, of the proportion of the popular vote gained by each party in Scotland. I disagree with all three amendments.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Is it more important, in the opinion of the Leader of the House, for the Select Committee to obey the convention that the Select Committee should reflect the composition of the whole House, or for us to obey Standing Order No. 130, which says that a Select Committee "shall" be established?

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the Select Committee should be set up in accordance with the generally acceptable conventions of the House. I should have welcomed the fact that it had been set up.

However, let me deal with Standing Orders. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman realises that this debate is not being held in accordance with Standing Orders. The debate that ended at 7 o'clock was not held in accordance with Standing Orders. The debate that we are to have on Thursday will not be in accordance with Standing Orders. The House has resolved to deal otherwise with these matters. It is a total non-point to say that the House must set up a Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 130, if the House resolves to do something else. That is the purpose of my motion. All the business of the House is in accordance with Standing Orders unless the House resolves to do something different. My motion recognises that it is not possible to comply with Standing Order No. 130. If the House approves it, my motion will be perfectly in order.

The Social and Liberal Democrats' amendment would result in a Committee that would not reflect the Government's majority, as the other Select Committees do, in this unitary Parliament. That basic convention was agreed at the start of the discussions and I do not believe that we should reject it now.

The other two amendments seem to me to place the Committee of Selection in the position either of nominating my right hon. and hon. Friends for Scottish constituencies, regardless of their refusal to serve, or of nominating colleagues on this side of the House exclusively from non-Scottish constituencies. I do not believe that the House would find either course acceptable.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Leader of the House is giving us a history lesson or a catalogue of failures by the usual channels. May I ask him to clarify what he said earlier? Is he saying that Standing Orders do not really matter—that when it suits the Government they want them but if it does not suit the Government they forget them? What are Standing Orders for? There are rules for conducting our business.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that this is not the place for me to give a tutorial on the workings of the House of Commons, but I am very willing to try. The Standing Orders of the House are the basis on which the House proceeds unless the House resolves to do something different. The House is continually resolving to do something different—sometimes at the Opposition's request. For example, the debate that terminated at 7 o'clock was for the benefit of the Opposition, as a result of discussions through the usual channels. This debate is not in accordance with Standing Orders. Therefore, Mr. Speaker kindly said that he had selected the three amendments that have been set down for debate. Had the Standing Orders of the House not been varied, that would probably not have been possible. Standing Orders are the basis on which we proceed unless we resolve to do something different.

The proposals of the official Opposition and the Scottish National party are unacceptable for two reasons. The first proposal would introduce press-ganging into our procedures for nominating Select Committees. The second, strictly non-Scottish option, although correct in procedural terms, goes against our traditions, both by providing that a majority of Members in a Committee dealing with Scottish affairs should come from non-Scottish seats and by its failure to contain a representative for a Scottish seat from the party in government.

Even if the official Opposition and the Scottish National party claim today that they would agree to the last course, I think that the House would be well advised to be cautious. The acceptance by the Scottish National party of the principle of a unitary Parliament has consistently been uncertain, to say the least. Although the official Opposition have said for some months that they accept the principle that this is a unitary Parliament, they still complain when Members for English constituencies take part in Scottish Question Time. Whatever their reasons, having considered the options, the Committee of Selection advised the House that in the circumstances it could find no generally acceptable basis on which to complete nominations to the Committee. For the reasons I have given, I share its conclusion.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Is the Leader of the House not prepared to accept that the purpose of Select Committees is to ensure that major Departments of state are brought to account before the House for their actions? Is he saying that when the Government decide that it is not convenient for a matter to be brought to the attention of the House it will not happen? What will happen when that principle is extended to other Departments?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has intervened at precisely the right moment in my speech. In the first part of my speech I have sought to suggest that it is for the Government to determine whether there is a generally acceptable basis for setting up the Select Committee, and it is for the House to decide whether to support my motion. The hon. Gentleman is quite right about the scrutiny of the work of the Scottish Office by Select Committees. The work of the Scottish Office continues to be the subject of inquiries by Select Committees.

The Public Accounts Committee has carried out five inquiries to which the Scottish Office gave evidence. They include a review of Scottish new towns, the report of the Scottish Development Agency on the private sector, a report on financial support for the fishing industry and, most recently, a report on the quality of clinical care in the National Health Service.

Scottish Office officials and Ministers have given evidence to a number of departmental Select Committees, including the Select Committee on Agriculture, the Select Committee on Transport and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. The House will recall that the report of the Select Committee on Energy on the privatisation of electricity which we debated on the Second Reading of the Electricity Bill last week contained recommendations directly concerned with privatisation in Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Leader of the House must accept that the argument that he is propounding is not good enough. It is not sufficient to suggest that other Select Committees can examine Scottish affairs in detail. The Department of Energy, in its report on privatisation, stated that it could not look in sufficient detail at the Scottish dimension which merited a separate report. It is just not good enough. The Minister is using an argument that would apply to every other Department. Why should Scotland be singled out as different?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not understand why the hon. Lady is quarrelling with me. I share her regret that it is not possible to set up the Select Committee. I am pointing out to the House that the Scottish Office is still subject to considerable scrutiny by Select Committees of the House.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The Leader of the House is being uncharacteristically disingenuous. Does he accept that, although there is a Select Committee on Defence, there are numerous overlapping reports of the Public Accounts Committee on defence matters? His argument is an argument for having no Select Committee on Defence and for abolishing all other specialised Select Committees. It is nonsense and he should know better.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. I regret that it is not possible to set up a Scottish Affairs Select Committee, but I am pointing out that it is possible for other Select Committees to scrutinise the work of the Scottish Office. If the hon. Gentleman reflects for a minute he will realise that what I am saying is correct.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Leader of the House give us his opinion about whether the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs would be competent to look into the affairs of the Scottish Office in view of the fact that the Government are increasingly treating Scotland as a colony?

Mr. Wakeham: That is not a matter for me. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is still a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, but he had better discuss that with his colleagues if he considers it a sensible way to proceed.

Since it is not any part of the Government's position to seek to limit Select Committee inquiries into Scottish matters, we welcome the fact that the Scottish Office continues to be the subject of scrutiny by hon. Members in Select Committees. We are also using the other parliamentary ways in which Scottish matters can be addressed by the House as they have been for many years, for example, by considering Scottish Estimates in the Scottish Grand Committee.

Hon. Members have suggested that, in recognising that it is not possible to find a generally acceptable way for nominating a Scottish Affairs Select Committee, we are contravening Standing Order No. 130 which states that such a Select Committee shall be appointed. But Standing Orders are a creation of the House, and are made for the House. It is not the other way around. As I have already said, it is commonplace to agree to motions varying the Standing Orders where that is for the general convenience in arranging business. For example, at the beginning of this Session, the House approved without debate or Division a motion varying the arrangements in Standing Order No. 13 for private Members' time. There is nothing new or revolutionary in the House determining that on a specific matter we should proceed differently from the way set out in Standing Orders.

We should reflect very carefully on the question of ordering hon. Members to serve on Select Committees so that Standing Orders may be fulfilled. Certainly the House has the power to do so, but I do not believe that it would wish to use it. Generally each hon. Member can decide for himself how he carries out his parliamentary duties. The House will consider it only fair that my right hon. and hon. Friends representing Scottish seats should have the same rights as other hon. Members. I regret their unwillingness to serve on the Select Committee, but I respect it. No doubt one or more of them will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, later in the debate. The House may also wish to reflect on the harm it would do to the reputation of our Select Committees if they were made up of hon. Members who had been dragooned into serving on them.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Leader of the House reflect on the irony that we are talking about press-ganging and ordering when the Government Whips have no difficulty in getting hon. Members with no great interest in Scottish affairs to attend Scottish Question Time and other occasions such as this debate, yet those hon. Members are not interested in the hard work of scrutinising the Scottish Office? The Leader of the House cannot talk about press-ganging—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House.

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman's example of dragooning and bullying in the Government Whips' Office is reflected on his side of the House, it has not been very successful recently. I can assure him that that does not happen in the Government Whips' Office.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I wish to inform my right hon. Friend that I am here because I want to be here and not because any Whip asked me to be here.

Mr. Wakeham: If I may say so in the House of Commons in this unitary Parliament, we are delighted to see my hon. Friend here.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my hon. Friend remember when he was Patronage Secretary? Will he remind the House how many Scottish Labour Members stopped people in England having the right to shop on Sundays and prevented us from changing our absurd Sunday trading laws which they do not have to put up with in Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend tempts me but I shall not follow that route.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Before the Leader of the House concludes, does he recognise that he is embarking on a profoundly undemocratic argument? He is saying that because Conservative Members decline to serve they have a right to veto the Select Committee over the majority of elected Members representing Scotland who have a duty to scrutinise the work of the Government.

Mr. Wakeham: I am saying that there is no generally acceptable way. It would be just as farcical for us to set up a Scottish Select Committee if the Labour party refused to serve on it as it would be if Government Members refused to serve on it.

Between 1983 and 1987 I spent quite a lot of time setting up Select Committees. I was most anxious to ensure that they should be set up with representatives from all parts of the House. I remember having debates late at night because there was a strong feeling that Members representing Ulster were not being properly treated and we defeated the nominations of the Committee of Selection. Over the years I have spent a considerable time ensuring that the chairmanships of the Select Committees were allocated on a fair basis between all Members of the House, as the previous Patronage Secretary did.

Therefore, I reiterate that if Opposition parties were not prepared to serve on a Select Committee I cannot see how that Select Committee would be of very much use to the House of Commons.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wakeham: No. I have given way very generously all around the House. I have spent more time sitting on my seat than standing up and I must conclude.

The motion reflects the belief that I have said I share with the Committee of Selection that there is no generally acceptable basis on which to nominate a Scottish Affairs Select Committee. Acknowledging that fact does not undermine the Government's support for the departmental Select Committee system. We remain as committed to it as we were when my predecessor invited the House to approve the establishment of departmental Select Committees in 1979. The motion is simply a recognition of the current position and I commend it to the House.

7.29 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The speech made by the Leader of the House was a travesty and created the impression that everyone was out of step apart from "our Johnnie" and that the poor man had been thwarted at every turn in his efforts to establish a Scottish Affairs Select Committee. The right hon. Gentleman has done his best to ensure that the Committee has not been established. If he had possessed the political will to establish it, it would have been set up months ago. It is no good him thrashing around trying to blame everyone else; the fault lies with him and his colleagues in the Government.

The democratic decision of the Scottish people reduced the number of Scottish Tory Members of Parliament to a rump of 10 out of 72. No one can deny that that caused the Government problems, such as trying to find Members of ministerial calibre for the Scottish Office. Living evidence of that problem is sitting on the Front Bench tonight. It means that five Scottish Tories were left to serve on the Committee. No one can deny that that caused the Government problems, but there were many possible solutions. One would have been to set up a Select Committee that did not have a majority of Government members but reflected the outcome of the 1987 election in Scotland. We understand that that was rejected by the Prime Minister herself. That having happened, the Labour party quite naturally expected the five Scottish Tory Members of Parliament who were not Ministers to serve on the Committee, but that did not prove to be the case. Apparently they have better things to do than scrutinise the activities of the Scottish Office and monitor the effects of Government policies on the Scottish people.

When we were forced to do so by the Government we reluctantly made it clear that we were prepared to allow Tory Members representing English seats to make up Tory numbers on the Committee, especially as at least 16 of them were born and, in some cases, brought up in Scotland. This was made clear to the Leader of the House in private discussions and by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and me in the debate on 13 January 1988. Since then, the Leader of the House has made no effort to bring the Committee into being. He keeps asserting, "In a unitary Parliament hon. Members from either side of the House are entitled to serve on any Committee." If that is what he and his colleagues believe, what are they waiting for? They should set up the Committee with hon. Members who are willing to serve on it.

It was preposterous to hear a former Tory Chief Whip speak out against press ganging. The Government have been willing to twist arms, make promises of health spending in constituencies and press any gang to pass some of their policies, yet they will not twist arms to set up the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

The Government cannot expect us to believe that Tory Members representing English constituencies are not interested in Scotland because the record shows that more than 130 of them have asked oral questions about Scotland or taken part in Scottish debates. A number of them do so quite regularly, so why does not the Leader of the House ask some of them to serve on the Committee in addition to any Scottish Tory Members who are willing to do so? The answer is that he and the rest of the Cabinet do not want a Scottish Affairs Select Committee, which would take embarrasing evidence even though its Tory majority might prevent it from producing embarrassing or damaging reports. Such a Committee could be highly inconvenient to the Government—an inconvenience that they do not want.

The Scottish Office is a major Department of state. Like other Departments, its activities should be scrutinised

continually and systematically by a departmental Select Committee; no other arrangements will be able to do that job properly. The Leader of the House suggested that the Public Accounts Committee and the Scottish Grand Committee could deal with these issues, but that was rejected in 1978 by the Select Committee on Procedure, which recommended the establishment of departmental Select Committees. It said that we should

"no longer rest content with an incomplete and unsystematic scrutiny of the activities of the Executive merely as a result of historical accident or sporadic pressures."

The Government are proposing just that—a historical accident in response to sporadic pressures from Scottish Tory Members.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's proposals are practical nonsense? In my role as Chairman of the Transport Select Committee, I am only too well aware of Committees' heavy work load. No matter how well meaning the Committees may be, they will be unable to deal with Scottish affairs, nor should they. Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a scandalous ploy to prevent disastrous Scottish Ministers from being further exposed to Select Committee scrutiny?

Mr. Dobson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Many Select Committees do not possess a single Scottish hon. Member, so no local knowledge will be fed into the Committee's scrutiny.

The debate is not about obscure aspects of parliamentary procedure but goes to the heart of the exercise of power in a democratic society—the concept of government by consent. The Government are proposing to use their majority to set aside obligations that have become inconvenient. For years, Tories have ignored or, worse still, obstructed the wish of Scottish people for a devolved form of government that will be seen to reflect more quickly and closely their needs and desires as democratically expressed in the ballot box. Not content with that, the Government are proposing to do away with existing arrangements designed to secure that at least the Scottish Office must reflect the concerns of those whom the Scottish people have elected.

I urge everyone in the House to treat what is happening tonight with the utmost seriousness. The parliamentary system will be brought into disrepute if we allow the Government to get away with what they propose, which is fraudulent, deceitful and dangerous. It is fraudulent because before the 1979 election the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), told the Scottish people that the Tories would come up with their own devolution proposals and that in the meantime a Scottish Select Committee would be set up.

After the election and the repeal of the Scotland Act 1978, and following pressure from the Labour party, the Scottish Affairs Select Committee was set up in parallel with other departmental Select Committees. In the words of the then Secretary of State for Scotland, the present Secretary of State for Defence, it would act

"as an effective watchdog on the programme and policies of the Scottish Office."

What price that watchdog now?

At the time of the devolution referendum, the present Secretary of State for Scotland was so dissatisfied with arrangements for the government of Scotland that he campaigned in favour of the Labour party's proposal for a Scottish assembly. After the 1979 election, in the debate on the repeal of the Scotland Act—he can turn about face pretty quickly—he commended improvements in the Select Committee system as making a

"major contribution towards improving the government of Scotland."

Surely he is not now saying that not setting up the Select Committee will make a major contributon to improving the government of Scotland.

After the 1987 election, despite the few Scottish Tory Members, the Secretary of State said that it would be "business as usual." Opposition Members are saying that part of the usual business is the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Will the hon. Gentleman remind the House of what proposals the Labour party now favours for devolved government in Scotland? How many seats should be removed to facilitate that?

Mr. Dobson: That cretinous interruption came from someone who is supposed to be one of the leading intellectuals in the Tory party.

For a year now, we in the Labour party have been pressing for the establishment of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. It is important to the people of Scotland and to their elected representatives, but it is just as important to those from other parts of Britain who believe in democratic institutions.

The Government propose to set aside the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs because it is politically inconvenient. It might cause embarrassment by, say, investigating the workings of the poll tax in Scotland—we agree that that would be embarrassing—but one of the most important functions of a freely elected Parliament is to be just that—an inconvenience to the Government. That is what we are here for. If the Government get away with swallowing up one inconvenient Select Committee, they will soon develop an appetite for Select Committees and swallow up others.

Tonight we see the naked use of power for the short-term party political advantage of the Tory party. The Government have taken Lord Hailsham's words about an elective dictatorship not as a warning but as a model. Such attitudes are dangerous in any circumstances, but they are doubly dangerous when they involve disdainful treatment of the elected representatives of the Scottish people who already feel badly and distantly governed.

Any Government—in particular, a Government led by a woman—should remeniber the words of Sylvia Pankhurst, "Coercion is not Government". Increasingly the people of Scotland feel coerced rather than governed. I remind the Government that it is the duty of all democratic Governments to carry the people with them. More important, I remind all hon. Members that it is the duty of all freely elected Parliaments to fashion instruments which control Governments, subject them to public scrutiny, and ensure that the voices of all citizens are heard and heeded. Whatever its shortcomings, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is one of those instruments. That is why Opposition Members would be failing in their most fundamental duty not only to the people of Scotland but to all our fellow citizens if we did not resist the Government's motion.

7.41 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The House will not be surprised to note that I am speaking in this debate. I was interested in what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said. He said that the practices that are being put forward are fraudulent, deceitful and dangerous. There was nothing fraudulent, deceitful or dangerous about the letter that I wrote in 1985 about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I clearly wrote out my views at the time, and they have not changed since then. The hon. Gentleman said also that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs would be inconvenient to the Government. In some quarters, my actions since 1985 would be construed as being inconvenient to the Government. Without any doubt, over a long period, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has attempted to establish the Committee. His motion is a recognition of the facts that we face.

As my right hon. Friend said, this is not the first time that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has not been set up. There does not appear to be any record of why the Committee was not set up in the 1972 period, other than that it was difficult to find hon. Members who were willing to serve on it. It is interesting to note that that occurred with hardly any parliamentary comment.

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to give wrong information to the House? I served on a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in 1972.

Mr. Speaker: Provided that it is in order, I cannot be responsible for what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman were a little less impetuous, he would have noted that I was talking about 1972-73, when he did not serve.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Gentleman should do his homework.

Mr. Walker: I have done my homework. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to see what homework I have done and what information I have.

I was one of those who, in 1979, desperately wanted a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to scrutinise the Government and to do its job effectively and properly. I was one of the most disappointed hon. Members when I found that the Committee was not conducting itself in a manner that would be beneficial to Scotland. My remarks do not reflect on the early stages of the Committee. The hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) were Chairmen of that Committee. It was a good, effective Committee, and I was proud to be a member of it. I am sorry to say that it did not continue in that vein.

It is interesting to note that, over the period 1979-80 to 1986-87, the Committee submitted 14 reports to the Scottish Office. Any Committee that prepares reports has a right to expect the Government to take note of them and, if required, to take action. Sadly, Committees that present reports that do not reflect the evidence that they received can expect scant attention from Ministers. That was my view in 1985, and it is still my view this evening.

Hon. Members hear a lot from the Scottish National party. In the period from 1979 to 1987, the Scottish National party refused to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. On 26 November 1979, the SNP was given the offer to serve. The record states:

"My right hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) has given the House his explanation. I spoke to the Leader of the SNP, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Craigton (Mr. Millan). Every opportunity was given to the SNP to have a Member on the Scottish Select Committee. Apparently it did not wish to have one."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1979; Vol. 974, c. 1059.]

Mr. Robert Hughes: The Government still went ahead and appointed the Select Committee, despite the objection to serve. Perhaps we should do that on this occasion.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I was talking about one possible member of the SNP. The point that I was making was one of principle rather than practice. If SNP Members—it reflects the humbug that we get from them—believe that the Scottish Affairs Select Committee was and is so important, why was it not important in 1979 and 1983? That is where the humbug is coming from. I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman or his predecessor on the Committee. I would serve tomorrow on a Committee of which either hon. Gentleman was a chairman.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been a long-established neighbour of the hon. Gentleman. As it has been announced that I was the Chairman-designate of the Select Committee that was to be set up, the hon. Gentleman seems to be implying that he would not serve on any Committee of which I was a chairman.

Mr. Speaker: Let the hon. Member answer that.

Mr. Walker: I regard the hon. Gentleman as one of my friends in the Opposition. Nothing that I say this evening reflects in any way on his integrity. I hope that he will accept that I cannot accept the kind of guarantees that we were supposed to get from the Labour party in the past and that it was unable to deliver. Its inability to deliver guarantees makes me extremely cautious about what is likely to happen. My remarks are no reflection on the hon. Gentleman or his integrity. His integrity has never been in doubt. It is important that we get this into the correct perspective.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): My hon. Friend talked of humbug from the Opposition. Does he recall that I was honoured to be called to sit on the Standing Committee on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill and does he remember the reception I had from Opposition Members who now suggest that they welcome Members representing English constituencies with an interest in Scottish matters sitting on Scottish Committees?

Mr. Walker: That was a helpful intervention and later I shall draw the attention of the House to these matters. That is the nub and the hub of everything that we are discussing this evening. Either we accept that this is a unitary Parliament or we do not.

It is important that all hon. Members understand the SNP's position between 1979 and 1987. Neither of the then SNP Members, Gordon Wilson and Donald Stewart, served on any Select Committee of any kind. Neither of those gentlemen attended Standing Committees at anything like the rate of my Scottish colleagues and I. I have all the figures if anyone is interested. Gordon Wilson,

who represented Dundee, East, attended 105 Standing Committees between 1979 and 1983 whereas I attended 228. Donald Stewart, who represented Western Isles, attended 51, fewer than anyone else. In the 1983-87 Parliament, Gordon Wilson had 71 attendances in Standing Committee whereas I had 148 and Donald Stewart had 20. In addition, I attended 79 Select Committee meetings during the 1979-83 Parliament and 64 during the 1983-87 Parliament. Therefore, any SNP Member who suggests that Scottish Conservative Members are not doing their job or pulling their weight is talking humbug and hypocrisy.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I am interested to hear how busy the hon. Gentleman has been. Certainly he has been busy since 1987. According to the Register of Members' Interests, he has been to Hong Kong and Peking twice, he has spent 18 days in Brazil and six days or more in China. He has three directorships and is an adviser to three other groups. Have not his business interests and gallivanting round the world more to do with his lack of interest in serving on a Scottish Affairs Select Committee and in doing what his Conservative constituents would like him to do, namely, look after the interests of Scottish Conservatives, and, God knows, there are not many of those?

Mr. Walker: That is a stupid and offensive attack. My visits were made during the recess. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] If the hon. Gentleman cares to note the companies which sponsored my visits to these different parts—*[Interruption.]* It is all on the record. He will see that I was acting in an unpaid capacity to assist them in their sales programme. *[Laughter.]* I would have thought that all hon. Members should be doing that. If the hon. Gentleman further examines my entry he will find that the advice and help I give to the organisations listed, such as the Scouts, the Air Cadets and the British Gliding Association, is given free. There is no charge.

I now turn to the Labour party—and Opposition Members should stop laughing, They may find that this is not so funny. In 1979 the Labour party had views on the establishment of a Scottish Affairs Select Committee, but those views were not unanimous. Not every Labour Member wanted the Committee to be set up. Willie Hamilton had this to say:

> "I also have doubts because of the unwarranted assumption that there are in the House—and I measure my words—120 Back Bench Members who will apply themselves diligently to the hard work entailed in serving on Select Committees . . . it is important to understand that there are reservations among Back Bench Members about the effectiveness of this package."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1979; Vol. 969, c. 98.]

The Labour party is constantly reminding the House of the difficulties that we in the Conservative party have in staffing Scottish business of whatever kind. The same Labour Members have no hesitation in becoming involved and active in matters which could be construed as being purely English business.

I am sure that the Water Bill is important and I have no objection to Members from all parts of the United Kingdom taking an interest. That is to be recommended and I am strongly in favour of it. But Opposition Members apparently say one thing when Scottish matters are affected and another when they are not. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] At 8.6 pm, as is shown in column 381 of the report of our debate on the Water Bill, on 7 December, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) spoke for 10 minutes. He was concerned about the Council for the Protection of Rural England. *[Laughter.]*

I draw the attention of the House to early-day motions 155, 172 and 191 standing in my name and those of some colleagues on

> "The Union and the Unitary Parliament."

Scottish Labour Members complain that English and Welsh Conservative Members who table Scottish questions are behaving badly and out of order, yet it is apparently in order for Scottish Labour Members to table questions on Northern Ireland, where the Labour party holds no seats. Early-day motion 172 states clearly that 37 questions were tabled for oral answer by Northern Ireland Ministers and that 27 of the questions were tabled by hon. Members representing English, Welsh and Scottish constituencies.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am desperate to try to save some time because the hon. Gentleman is tilting at windmills. No Labour Member is suggesting that English Members should not take an interest in the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. We are anxious that they should because we then might get the Committee. As the Secretary of State, with his careful attention to language, will appreciate, we have never argued that English Members with a genuine interest in Scottish affairs should be banned from Scottish questions. This is an important point and I want to get it over to the House. We have made it clear that we object to the clearly orchestrated campaign where hon. Members have been abrasive, provocative and irritating for the sake of it, have no interest in what is going on and when the whole escapade has been conducted like some public school dormitary jape.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman talks about orchestration. I have been doing a little research and had a lot of research done on the Order Papers for the past two weeks and I can deal effectively with the hon. Gentleman's point. On Tuesday 20 December six Scottish Labour Members had questions tabled to the Department of Education and Science. More important, 12 Scottish Labour Members have questions tabled to the Department of Transport for Monday 16 January and seven of them are fascinated by the Channel tunnel.

If one looks at them carefully, one will see that a number of them are identical in every word. Where is the orchestration? I, frankly, support them in doing that and I am not being critical. I am responding to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, who opened for the Opposition. He mentioned those aspects and I just happened to have the information handy in case he did.

There have been questions recently on North East Shipbuilders. The north-east, of course, is the north-east of England and, quite properly, a number of Scottish Members participated. The hon. Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked questions.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East) *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute.

I accept that the hon. Member for Dundee, East knows that North East Shipbuilders have an interest in Dundee.

[Mr. Walker]

I make no complaint about that. I am merely drawing attention to the fact that, of the three hon. Members who asked questions, the hon. Member for Dundee, East was the only one with a direct interest.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way in a moment.

We have heard a lot about what is right and what is wrong. What I would say to Opposition Members is that it is my view that I have achieved more in this Parliament for Scotland, while not serving on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, than I have achieved in all the months and years that I have spent as a member of that Committee. During this Parliament, with the assistance of Opposition Members, I have been instrumental in placing the Scotch Whisky Act 1988 on the statute book. With the assistance of Opposition Members, I have played a part in saving the search and rescue helicopter flight at Leuchars.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way in a moment as it is important that I finish this point. Also, with the assistance of Opposition Members, I have been instrumental in getting a reprieve for the Dundee dental college. My view is that I have used my time more effectively and efficiently than I could ever have done as a member of a Committee whose reports would not have been considered by the Ministers who received them.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the early-day motion on the North East Shipbuilders, I point out to the hon. Gentleman that I have a direct constituency interest in the continuity of that shipyard, because, if the Government had not betrayed the workers of Sunderland—in that the Ministers prevented that yard from winning an order from Cuba for 10 ships—the engines for those 10 ships would very likely have been built at Clark Kincaid of East Hamilton street, Greenock.

Mr. Walker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention, because it helps me make the point to which I was coming.

Dr. Godman: It is bringing the hon. Gentleman back to the truth.

Mr. Walker: Members on the Government side of the House who represent English constituencies have many direct interests in Scottish constituencies and business. I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman about his involvement in northern England affairs. I wish to encourage that as that is how I see this unitary Parliament functioning and working.

What I find interesting about the debate is that we do not get the same heated interest in Northern Ireland, which there should be if all the factors discussed this evening were agreed. They are not, of course, but if they were, Northern Ireland would have the same case for having a Select Committee on Northern Ireland affairs.

However, we all know that there are differences, which may be part of the problem in the way that we try to run our parliamentary system. This is not the evening when I wish to speak at length on that, because that is not the reason why we are here. I believe that the time is long overdue for us to talk seriously about how we should run our unitary parliamentary system in all parts of the United Kingdom. If we do not, the danger is that for short-term party political opportunism—I shall not put it any higher than that—a unitary Parliament, and all of us who believe in a unitary parliamentary system, could be at grave risk. We may differ on the solutions, but I believe that it is important that we should get down to serious talking about it instead of constantly flaunting, for short-term political gains, slogans that have nothing to do with the realities of passing legislation through the House, and we should act in a way that is good for the responsible government of Scotland and the United Kingdom.

8.6 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The motion is a sad one. I regret to say that the Leader of the House presented a very undignified and pathetic figure when he sought to justify it. The motion refers to the Committee of Selection, but we all know that the failure to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs lies with the Leader of the House and the Patronage Secretary. It has nothing to do with the Committee of Selection which, by and large, takes the names offered to it by the Whips. Although I am sure that the Leader of the House, who is in his place, tried hard, the fact is that the failure lies with the Government. I am certain that if the Government had had the will, we could have had a solution.

Much has been said by hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), about the Select Committee system. Some hon. Members say and believe that Select Committees are a distraction which takes hon. Members away from more important work. The hon. Gentleman quoted our old friend Willie Hamilton. Some people believe that the dignity and importance of the Chamber would diminish once a Select Committee was set up. What the hon. Gentleman said was half true, which is the problem with the hon. Gentleman. He makes half true statements. I do not quarrel with the statements quoted from *Hansard* of my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, as he then was, Mr. Willie Hamilton, who was arguing against the entire Select Committee system. However, he was not arguing that there should not be a committee on Scottish affairs. The hon. Gentleman should not attempt to twist words.

I do not hold the hon. Gentleman's view. I believe that Select Committees are important. I served as a member of the Select Committee in the incarnation of both the Select Committees on Scottish Affairs. First, it was set up specifically to consider land use. I am reminded that in the 1960s there was a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs which considered especially steel. The Select Committee system has a long history. Committees have been sporadic. They have been set up to consider specific matters at different times and then have disappeared. It is not a question of the system lapsing. There never was any continuity until we had the Select Committee system set up by Norman St. John-Stevas, as he then was.

Secondly, I sat on the Select Committee as an ordinary member when it was a regular, growing concern. I was proud—I still am—to have succeeded my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) as Chairman. I found the Committee and its work most useful.

I believe that, while Government Departments in general have been appalling in their responses to the criticisms of Select Committees, the fact is that the Scottish Office has been one of the better Departments of state in responding to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Paradoxically, it has often been a minority report of Opposition Back Benchers on the Committee that it has taken up, and has rejected Government Back Benchers' majority reports. The hon. Member for Tayside, North made some sour comments about the Government and the Scottish Office not following the views of the Select Committee. He tried again to twist matters slightly.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Is it not correct that sometimes the Select Committee took up a subject on representations that it received from Ministers —especially Ministers in the Scottish Office—and sometimes Ministers representing United Kingdom Departments, for example, the Department of Trade and Industry? Therefore, the purpose of the Select Committee was not only to monitor the work of the Scottish Office and Scottish Ministers but was sometimes to give the Secretary of State for Scotland support in the various Cabinet sub-committees when they were taking decisions on the future of certain Scottish affairs.

Mr. Hughes: I am happy to concur. The general view, and sometimes received wisdom, was that the Select Committee was always a bear garden, with everyone fighting with one another, constantly with daggers drawn against the Scottish Office, but that was not true. I do not know why there was a sudden sea change by Scottish Office Ministers towards the idea of a Select Committee. On all the Scottish Select Committees there had always been useful co-operation and discussion between the Government and Chairmen on valuable points.

I accept that the work of the Select Committees appeared, on occasions, to disappear. But even if recommendations are not acted upon, it is important that we get the best information so that we can conduct our political debate. Debating in ignorance does not do democracy any good. Evidence is useful. I do not deny that there have been difficulties. Scottish politics is a vibrant body. It sometimes seems like a cockpit, with all of us trying to scratch one another's eyes out.

Scottish Members are a comparatively small number of Members of Parliament and we constantly meet through television, radio and the press or in the House and have a go at one another—and why not? Scottish politics are probably more adversarial than in other parts of the United Kingdom, and that is a good thing. What is wrong with vigorous debate? Why can we not vigorously debate without personal animosity? Sometimes animosity arises, but this form of politics is good for the system and I do not understand why we cannot continue it. It is said that the vigorous way in which we conduct our democracy makes it difficult to step back and take an objective look in the way that Select Committees are supposed to do. Select Committees were able to do that in the past, without blunting the thrust of their investigations or of questions.

None of the difficulties is insuperable. If the Government had the good will, they should be able to introduce this system. The failure of Conservative Back Benchers in particular, especially those representing Scottish seats, to serve as members of the Committee shows their lack of self-confidence in themselves and their party. That Scottish Office Ministers are afraid to face questions shows an amazing lack of confidence.

We are told ad nauseam in advertisements on television and in glossy material how good the Government are and what marvellous work they are doing in Scotland. Then we hear the plaintive cry, "What a shame that that is not understood in Scotland." We understand what the Government are doing. There is an excellent set of Scottish Ministers on the Government Front Bench, but we hear the plaintive cry that they are misunderstood and that we do not appreciate their work. We are told that St. Andrew's House is an efficient, tightly run ship. If all that is true, what do Scottish Office Ministers have to hide? Why cannot they allow their actions to be open to public scrutiny? They should be so pleased with themselves that they trample over us trying to get on a Select Committee. Such a system should have been set up long ago. The Government could have provided the Select Committee with the necessary Members.

Leaving aside the dragooning point, I accept that one cannot compel a Member to do anything that he does not want to do. But the Government always find their way when they want something done. There are the blandishments and the offers of knighthoods—there is hope yet for the hon. Member for Tayside, North. The Government could have gone further.

I accept that some of the strident views put in the Scottish press did not help our cause. I was one of those who, from the beginning, was prepared to accept Members from English seats sitting on a Scottish Select Committee. It is important that they should look at what we do and that we should learn from their experience. I do not believe that the Scots have the arrogance to say that everything they do in Scotland is right and that they know better than anyone else. We have much to teach the United Kingdom about politics. That is why we take part in United Kingdom debates. We should not be frightened of English Members—even if they are English rather than Scots representing English seats—serving on a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I should welcome that because it is important to set up such a Committee.

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) said that the Scottish Grand Committee no longer had added Members on it and was made up only of Scots. During his absence, there was a slight change. A trade-off was made so that the Scottish Grand Committee was composed entirely of Scottish Members but there were to be no votes. That was wrong. We should not rely on the exclusiveness of Scottish Members on the basis of not voting.

Mr. Sillars: Have there been no votes on the Scottish Grand Committee when it has been composed solely of Scottish Members of Parliament?

Mr. Hughes: I recollect that there has been one vote. That was the general deal done, but there is nothing in Standing Orders to say so. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the record, he will find that there have been few votes in the Scottish Grand Committee since it was composed solely of Scottish Members. But that was a minor aside. Scottish exclusivity does not give the whole picture and is not always wholly good.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. In

[Mr. Hughes]

private conversations he made a helpful suggestion which he has empowered me to mention. We are all anxious to have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs up and running. My hon. Friend has suggested that, if we cannot get an agreement on a Select Committee which runs every week and every year, perhaps the Government would consider setting up a Special Committee on Scottish Affairs, as existed in the past, to look at a particular issue and, if that works, we could go on to another Special Committee. I support my hon. Friend's helpful suggestion entirely.

I hope that the Leader of the House will think again, even at this stage. I am not pleading with him, because I will not plead with anyone on this matter. I ask him in the interests of his party and Government and of democracy and the people of Scotland to withdraw the motion and consider the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East. If he does, he will have done a great service to the House of Commons.

8.17 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I wish that the reasonable approach of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) had been available on the Labour Front Bench a year ago. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) put some Opposition Members to flight by bringing out statistics which proved the humbug of their case. I shall put my view on how I saw matters last year.

After the 1987 election I expected to be a member of the Select Committee. On returning from the recess in October 1987, I reluctantly gave up my place on the Defence Select Committee—a place which I had achieved after many years of waiting and which I had enjoyed. That shows that I believed that I would be wanted for the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and would have to forgo something that it had taken me a long time to achieve. I was happy that the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) was to be the Chairman.

Problems began to arise when on 12 November the Committee of Selection tabled the list of Members for the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Members were available from the Conservative and minority parties but not from the Labour party. If the Labour party had got itself organised and made its Members available, the Committee might well have been set up on 12 November, ready to go and off, but it had not. The following week, my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, as he has already explained, declined his place and made the interesting discovery that there was a right to refuse to serve should one so wish.

By the time that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) had arranged the names of Labour Members, the Committee of Selection was not in a position to set up the Select Committee because insufficient Conservative Members were available. During that crucial time in November, the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) played their hand badly. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley made it clear that on no account would the Labour party put up with any English Members on the Committee.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made an impassioned plea about accepting hon. Members from English constituencies on the Select Committee. It is strange that before joining the Standing Committee which considered the School Boards (Scotland) Bill, I was told that a story had been put into the mouths of reporters on the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman*. The same gentleman who accused me of having no interest in Scottish affairs was an English Member who had no interest in Scotland. The story did not appear. It went on the spike after the reporters checked their facts and learned of my experience in Scottish education.

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but he is a little ahead of my story. I am still dealing with November 1987 when the hon. Member for Garscadden tried to dictate to the Scottish Tory party, through the press and individually, saying that he would not approve of topping up unless it was with Members of Parliament who suited his view. I found that unacceptable. The Labour Front Bench spokesmen made it plain that they would accept only certain Tory Members to serve on a Select Committee. Their attitude did more than anything else to make me and my hon. Friends feel that the Labour party's attitude would make a Scottish Affairs Select Committee intolerable. Let me make it clear that until that happened I anticipated our having a Select Committee.

The Opposition's attitude has run true to form in business in the House and in Committee, including their refusal last April to co-operate, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House explained earlier, on a deal that would have allowed an additional English Tory Member on the Standing Committee, an arrangement by which we could have set up a Select Committee. The Labour party has fallen flat on its face on so many opportunities that it ill behoves it to come to the House groaning away and complaining that it is all our fault that there is no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

We are also worried about the usual channels. We all know that the House could not operate without them. The Whips on both sides of the House and the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House have to co-operate if the business of the House is not to grind to a halt. Everybody knows that it is only too easy to find ways of making business in the House intolerable if hon. Members wish to do so. Unless we accept discipline and honour agreements made through the usual channels, everything becomes difficult to manage and it is the country that loses.

Time and again the Opposition have failed to deliver agreements. Last week, the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), whom I am sorry to see has departed, made a lengthy speech on the Transport (Scotland) Bill after 11.45 pm. That was in order and no one could prevent him from doing so, but that was contrary to an agreement made through the usual channels that the business would end at 11.45 pm. The Minister and the Opposition spokesman arranged their closing speeches for that time. No wonder the House falls into disarray when that sort of thing occurs. We then had an interesting speech lasting 45 minutes from the hon. Member for Falkirk, West. However, that shows how important it is that we have discipline within and between parties if we are to proceed in a correct and efficient manner.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I have a specific question to ask the hon. Gentleman who has courteously given way. Since he is extolling the various virtues of the House and telling us that there must be discipline and so on, is he telling the House that, with regard to serving on a Select Committee, he is on strike?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman should not try to bring his profession into the House. I am not used to taking such action.

In a Select Committee, where there will obviously be a small majority, discipline must prevail if it is to work satisfactorily. Nothing that I have seen in the Chamber or in Standing Committee has given me any encouragement to think that the Opposition will behave with such discipline in the Select Committee.

When I joined the Select Committee in the 1983 Parliament it was different from what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North described. It was already at daggers drawn. It seemed an astonishing way of trying to interview and monitor the Scottish Office or to come to any unanimous report. Such an approach to the Select Committee was disappointing.

One has only to look at the reports on Scott Lithgow and Ravenscraig and Gartcosh—hon. Members may remember that I voted against the Government on that issue. We reached a unanimous view only on the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the fisheries protection reports. Otherwise, party lines were here, there and everywhere. That is no way to monitor effectively a Government Department. Fighting and voting on party lines time and again is no good. There was none of the cut and thrust of constructive debate that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North would like; amendments were purely party-political, with voting this way and that. It was a thoroughly disappointing operation in which to be involved.

The Opposition's attitude to discipline and to the usual channels which must operate it during the efforts to appoint a Select Committee in November and December 1987 and their likely attitude to the Select Committee if it were set up leads one to believe that the most satisfactory way forward, enabling hon. Members to spend as much time as possible on Scottish affairs in a united way throughout the House, is to support the motion of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House so that we can get on with business rather than listen to the Opposition groaning away on this issue which does not have the importance that they like to suggest.

8.28 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): It would appear that the House is about to administer the last rites to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. Its death knell has sounded and the Government will see to it by trundling in their voting machine at the end of the debate, claiming authority while closing their eyes and ears to the fact that in Scotland and in the rest of the United Kingdom the majority of people do not support them. So much for democracy. So much for this place, the so-called mother of Parliaments. That makes it a sham. As my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) pointed out, after the last election the Secretary of State for Scotland, leading a Conservative band of nine Members, said that it would be business as usual. But here we are, witnessing the lack of political will to set up a Select Committee.

I believe that the Committee of Selection should note the sensible suggestion that the composition of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee should reflect the number of Scottish seats held by the various political parties. That is what our amendment proposes. It would mean a Committee of five Labour Members, three Conservatives —which is a mite generous—two Social and Liberal Democrats and one Scottish National party member.

The assumption that that would not work is both ridiculous and insulting. On 13 January, referring to a former Select Committee, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said:

> "We were spending hours and hours indulging in what were often pure party-political battles."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 408.]

Times have changed, as the Conservative party in Scotland knows only too well. I believe that a Scottish Select Committee constituted on the lines that I have suggested would work, particularly if it included the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), and myself. There would be less of the alleged skulduggery and more feminine common sense.

A Select Committee does not legislate; neither does the Scottish Grand Committee. It has no Government majority. I find nothing more shameful than the spectacle of the Scottish Grand Committee sitting and talking in Edinburgh and then having to travel 400 miles to enact legislation down here. The fact that it is a convention of the House to have a Government majority on the Select Committee is not an acceptable excuse. This Government are all-powerful, and perfectly capable of changing or ignoring our conventions. But of course they will not do so, because they obviously do not want a Scottish Select Committee to have powers to call for persons, including Ministers, or to call for papers and records, to ensure effective scrutiny of the Scottish Office and Scottish public affairs. They do not want an in-depth look at the Government in Scotland who are plunging around like a rogue elephant and leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.

There has been no scrutiny of the consequences of the repeated reorganisations and restructuring of the Health Service, when it has been proved that the Government are incapable of good management. Their man management is deplorable, because they are unable to build on what is good and always end up throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

There has been no scrutiny of the Scottish Education Department and the morale of the teaching profession. Worst of all, there has been no scrutiny of the damage being done to our Scottish universities. Of course a Scottish Select Committee is not allowed to look at that aspect of our higher education. It is shameful and disgraceful, and so the destruction goes on.

I understand that five of the Scottish Tory Members attended Oxford or Cambridge, so it is not surprising that they care nothing for, and understand nothing of, our universities north of the border. The misguided interference of the University Grants Committee and those bred in a different academic tradition shows real hostility to Scottish intellectual needs, achievements and aspirations.

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

The so-called rationalisation of resources at the behest of the UGC betrays a complete inability to understand the purpose of a university in Scotland, or the town and gown relationship. In Scotland a university is a community institution. The UGC, however, sees it as departments or cost centres dotted around the country, on which it bases its allocation of funds. All in Scotland have suffered, none more so than Aberdeen university as it approaches its 500th anniversary, and the latest blow has been the announcement of the closure of its music department.

We have no Scottish Affairs Committee and no Scottish Members on the Education Select Committee. What hope is there?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: None.

Mrs. Michie: None. Is the intention to reconstitute all Select Committees to reflect Scottish affairs? I do not know why we are having this debate. I believe that it is a farce.

Scottish Question Time has also become a farce because many of us are not called. We who try to represent our constituencies find that the time is taken up by people who know nothing about Scotland. All along the line we have been betrayed, and in the recent past we have been betrayed by two Prime Ministers. First, there was Lord Home of the Hirsel. In Scots "the Hirsel" means a place where sheep are kept. The night before the devolution referendum Lord Home promised the Scots that if they voted no they would get a better deal. In more recent times the present Prime Minister has done exactly the same.

Now Scotland knows that it has been betrayed again and again. The refusal to set up a Select Committee is another slap in the face for Scotland, my country. The Government should be warned that, through their continued arrogance and their dismissive attitude to Scottish political sensitivities and aspirations, they will bear the responsibility for breaking up the United Kingdom.

8.37 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I am not sure quite to whom the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) referred when she talked about universities, but I assure her that I was born and educated at St. Andrew's and also taught there. I did, however, agree with her on at least one point: she was right in saying that it is extremely inconvenient for Scottish Grand Committee meetings to take place in Edinburgh. The sooner that they are moved to London the better.

The hon. Lady referred to the role of the Government in the debate. That was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), and I shall return to it later. First, let me refer to two earlier speeches by Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) made a constructive and sensible speech, wholly different in tone from all the previous Opposition speeches on the issue. Let me say to Labour Members that if that speech had been made on behalf of the parliamentary Labour party shortly after the general election they would have a Scottish Select Committee.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is not in his place, although I do not criticise him for having had to slip out briefly, but for him to refer to the many constructive interventions of my hon. Friends who represent English constituencies at Scottish Question Time and then to pray that in aid, asking them to serve on the Scottish Select Committee, is the height of humbug and hypocrisy. Every time any of my hon. Friends gets up, there is a kind of tribal yowling from the Opposition Benches.

It is absolutely clear that Opposition Members resent in principle interventions in Scottish debates by my hon. Friends who represent English constituencies. By contrast, I often enjoy the contributions of English Opposition Members to debates on Scottish affairs—occasionally they provide illuminating shafts of light. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras possibly lacked brilliant sparkle this evening; but his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) did not. After the conclave at the SOGAT retreat just after the Govan by-election, the hon. Member for Copeland said of the conditions then prevailing among Scottish Labour Members:

"The jocks are running about like headless chickens."

No doubt we shall hear some squawking from them, headless or no.

Of more direct relevance to the debate was the excellent recent statement by the Leader of the Opposition. I hope we can all agree to congratulate him on it. He said that the current debate and recent opinion polls about independence for Scotland were merely a talking point among the chattering classes. I hope that I have the unanimous support of Labour Members from Scottish constituencies in applauding that statement. The Leader of the Opposition holds many views with which I disagree, but I have always thought that on the Scottish question he is at heart the soundest of chaps.

If it is true that the debate about Scottish independence is merely a talking point for the chattering classes, how much more true that is about this debate, which perhaps is not even a talking point. It is, however, important, because of the point of principle that has been established for the future by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). The existence or otherwise of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is not in itself a matter of great importance. My view, about that have always been clear and on the record——

Mr. Salmond: I have been reading the Scottish insert in the Conservative manifesto of 1983 for the election at which the hon. Gentleman stood. It reads:

"We are concerned at all times to improve the quality of government in Scotland. To this end, we have set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, which has done much useful work in Scotland and at Westminster."

The hon. Gentleman stood for election on that manifesto; has he changed his mind?

Mr. Stewart: Conditions changed somewhat between 1983 and 1987—precisely the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North in his excellent speech——

Mr. Bill Walker: Just to get the record straight, the early years of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee were successful—I made that clear in my speech. My reason for wanting things to change did not begin until 1985.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting his position so clearly. He makes a valid point.

My views on the matter were clearly and correctly reported in the *Glasgow Herald* as long ago as 28 July 1987, on the front page under the headline:

"Scottish Committee should go, says Tory".

The *Herald* rightly quoted me as saying that the Scottish Select Committee should be abolished as a complete irrelevance and waste of time. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made an interesting response. The *Glasgow Herald* reported that my statement met with scorn from the shadow Scottish Secretary:

"it would be ludicrous to suggest that the Scottish Office . . . should escape the attention of a select committee"

said the hon. Member for Garscadden. It struck me then that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues, in believing what he said, were going to make the classic error of confusing the improbable with the impossible, especially as Labour Members were going around at that time claiming that they had won the election and held a mandate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) rightly referred to the usual channels, but at the time in question the usual channels in Scotland had been abolished by the hon. Member for Garscadden, who proudly told the Scottish press that on his instructions Scottish Labour Members would not meet or discuss anything with my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) because he represented an English constituency. Labour Members failed to realise what was happening; they failed to realise my hon. Friend's determination and the real concerns of other Conservative Members. They showed an inability to count —with the exception of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), who suggested his own formula for setting up a Select Committee, a Committee of five. I am open to correction, but I understand that that was rejected out of hand by the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary colleagues——

Mr. Lambie: The hon. Gentleman knows, as do all other former members of the Select Committee, that during the whole of my period as a member of it I said that it was too big—we were up to about 13. I continually made representations for a much smaller Committee. So what the hon. Gentleman said was nothing new—it was a continuation of a consistent policy which was usually honoured.

Mr. Stewart: I am glad to have given the hon. Gentleman the chance to make that point. He was right to say that he was consistent, and he speaks with the experience of having been the Committee's Chairman. It is a pity that his suggestion was ruled out of court by his hon. Friends.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries referred to the position taken by Scottish Labour Members in November and December last year and to their refusal to accept the idea of English Conservative Members which was advanced so reasonably by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North tonight, the hon. Member for Garscadden shook his head—I see the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) shaking his head, too. But the record is clear, and I refer Opposition Members to it. On 22 October 1987, speaking on behalf of the Scottish parliamentary Labour group—I take it—the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said this to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House:

"the only options before the Government and the House are to give the Committee a Labour majority, which would reflect the balance of parties in Scotland, to reduce the membership of the Committee to three members, or to import English Tory Members to sit on it, which would be as unacceptable to them as to us. May we have an absolute assurance from the Leader of the House that neither of the second two options would be accepted and put before the House?"—[*Official Report*, 22 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 941.]

That seems clear enough to me. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries was right in referring to the record when he concluded, in essence, that the Labour party blew it. As the House knows, the Government went ahead anyway, and nominated the five Scottish Conservative Back Benchers to the Committee of Selection, including myself.

I must say that I did not realise the importance of Standing Order No. 104—nor did my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries—which was so successfully invoked by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, who had obviously studied the Standing Orders in greater detail than I had. He has, of course, established an important principle, which will, no doubt, be referred to by many hon. Members in future. The principle is that there is no compulsion on any hon. Member to serve on a Select Committee—or, I assume, on any other Committee of the House.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The important principle that has been established this evening—if the hon. Gentleman can drag himself away for a moment from the transcendental minutiae that seemed to make up the bulk of his speech —has been established by the Leader of the House. He told us, in effect, that if Members of the Government party refused to serve, as is their right, on any Select Committee, the Government would be legitimately justified in refusing to establish that Select Committee, thereby avoiding any scrutiny of Government business. That has been established tonight and it will have implications far wider than for Scotland alone; it will have implications for the good government of the whole of the United Kingdom and for the democratic scrutiny of Parliament.

Mr. Stewart: The important point that I am making —I accept that it may not refer to Standing Committees —is that it has been established that no hon. Member is under any compulsion to serve on a Select Committee.

I shall now deal with the Government's role in the matter, which has been referred to constantly by Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland quoted the statement that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made after the last election, that it would be business as usual. However, the point is that the Select Committee is the business not of the Secretary of State but of Back Benchers. My hon. Friend the Minister of State may be winding up the debate this evening, but that is because the Scottish Office obviously has a general interest in the Select Committee and in matters relating to Scotland. I hope that my hon. Friend will confirm to the House that the Secretary of State for Scotland has no responsibility whatever in relation to the setting up of the Select Committee.

Reference has been made to the Whips and the business managers, who are, of course, in constant communication with hon. Members. However, there is no compulsion that they, or anyone else, can put on hon. Members who do not

[Mr. Stewart]

want to serve on a Select Committee. Many of the criticisms that have been laid at the Government's door tonight are wholly misplaced because the Government did not have, and do not have, the power to compel Back Benchers who do not wish to serve on the Select Committee to do so.

I now want to make one or two points about my own view of the Select Committee. I asked myself whether there would be any benefit to the people of Eastwood if I served on the Scottish Affairs Committee. The answer to that was, fairly unequivocally, that there would be no benefit that I could discern to my constituents from spending time on the Scottish Affairs Committee. The second question was whether there was any chance that the Scottish Affairs Committee would do a reasonable job. The Opposition might be reasonably objective in accepting that we do not live in a perfect world, so it might get on reasonably well. I referred to that possibility in my speech in the last debate on this subject and I referred to the possibility of concrete, bankable assurances on that. Of course, none was forthcoming. I have never thought that there was a reasonable chance, in the present political climate and in the light of the experiences of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, that the Scottish Affairs Committee, if it was established, would do a reasonable and objective job.

Labour Members have largely brought this situation on themselves. They delight in referring to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his supporters —of whom I am one—as quislings and traitors. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is on record as using the term "quisling" from the Opposition Front Bench, and I was described on a radio broadcast in which I took part with an Opposition Member as a traitor. If that is Opposition Members' attitude, they will not get the co-operation that they need to set up the Scottish Affairs Committee. The comeuppance for that attitude, and for using the language of nationalism, was their by-election defeat in Govan. I hope that relations between the parties will be reasonable throughout this Parliament, but it must be said that the Labour party in Scotland has brought the end of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs on itself.

8.55 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The speech of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was not designed to create good relations between the Labour and the Conservative parties or, indeed, between any two groups of people.

It is difficult to contain one's anger at the way in which Scottish affairs are being treated. Apart from the two opening speeches, all the speeches made so far have been made by hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies. Rightly or wrongly, I feel that the three Conservative Back Benchers present—the hon. Members for Eastwood, for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro)—have a perverted sense of pleasure at the way in which they are frustrating the political will of the people of Scotland.

I have been in the House for nearly 18 years. I have known countless Leaders of the House, but I have never seen one in a weaker position than the present Leader of the House as he sought to defend his position. In effect, he was saying that five Tory Back Benchers can stop 62 Opposition Members of all political parties who represent Scottish constituencies from carrying out effectively the task for which they were elected.

I make no apology for repeating a warning that I gave not long after the last general election. Democracy is a fragile thing, and it has been seriously damaged by the attitude displayed in this debate. I came here tonight innocently believing that we were searching for a solution to the problem of setting up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I was absolutely wrong. The purpose of the debate has been not only to kill off but to bury the possibility of setting up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and I suppose that I should not be surprised at that.

Before I expound my argument, I want to register my protest that the debate is to be wound up by the Minister of State, Scottish Office, although it is not a protest against him personally. It is ludicrous that a Minister of State at the Department that is the subject of complaints about its failing to be examined should try to justify why that Department should not be examined. There is no place in this debate for a Scottish Office Minister, and this really ought not to be allowed to happen. It is a further insult to the integrity of the House.

There is a deliberate attempt to diminish the role and responsibility of the Scottish Office. That is why in the last Session, major amendments to the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Amendment Act 1984 were contained in English legislation. That is why amendments in relation to educational provision in Scotland were contained in English legislation. That is why the proposals to privatise the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board are contained in a United Kingdom Bill. It is much more sinister than just having insufficient Scottish Tory Back-Bench Members. If the role of the Scottish Office continues to diminish, it will no longer be worth examining.

There has also been an attempt, either deliberately or unconsciously, to deceive. The Leader of the House and his colleagues talked about the non-existence of Select Committees on Scottish Affairs between 1973 and 1979. If the right hon. Gentleman did not know about this, he must have been inadequately briefed. In those days a Select Committee was set up to consider a specific matter. In the 1960s, in response to a demand from the House of Commons, a Select Committee was set up to consider the steel industry in Scotland. A similar Committee was set up in 1972-73 to consider land use in Scotland. Those Committees were different from the Select Committees that we have now, which examine the work of a specific Department.

I can say with some pleasure that the Leader of the House is a good personal friend of mine, but it will be a sad reflection on him if he tries to persuade the country that a Government with such a large majority cannot find enough Back-Bench Members to form a Select Committee. The right hon. Gentleman can introduce all sorts of legislation against the wishes of the people of Scotland. That is dead easy for him. He can say, "That is all ABC stuff, but do not ask me to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs because I cannot do it." He is the weakest Leader of the House in the weakest position that I have

ever seen. I am sorry to criticise him in his absence, but that is not my fault. After presenting that picture to the House, he cannot be a proud man tonight.

It was odious to hear the Leader of the House, followed by the hon. Members for Tayside, North and for Dumfries, compare the position of Scotland with that of Northern Ireland. It sounded like a warning to us. We should not allow those remarks to pass unchallenged. Tomorrow when we read *Hansard* and in the days and weeks ahead we must consider why those remarks were made and their likely effect on Scottish politics.

The SNP, the other parties in Scotland, *The Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, Scottish Television and the BBC have all had great fun saying that the Labour party is being ignored. But tonight the SNP and the Social and Liberal Democrats are being ignored, too. We are all being ignored, and that is what has caused the tension in Scotland.

Our fragile democracy could easily be snapped by the attitude we have seen displayed. There is a way out but I admit that it is a compromise. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was kind enough to refer to a proposition that I wish to put. I am grateful that the Leader of the House has returned in time to hear it.

The way out of the dilemma is to return to the original Select Committee system. The Leader of the House needs only to put a motion on the Order Paper suggesting that a Select Committee should be set up to consider a specific subject. My goodness, there is no shortage of subjects. There is the Hughes report on the future of the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Training Agency. Nothing is more important for the industrial future of Scotland.

Mr. Hughes put his suggestions to the Prime Minister. The Secretary of State for Scotland trailed along on his coat tails. He did not know anything about the document until he boarded the train at Waverley station, and the first time he saw it was when it was handed to him in No. 10. If that is the treatment given to the Secretary of State, it is time we looked at the proposals in the Hughes report and the effect they will have on the SDA, HIDB and the Training Agency.

I am sure that the SNP would want to examine its proposition on an independent Scotland in Europe. No attempt was made to examine that subject in "Left, Right and Centre" on Scottish Television on Friday night.

There is the issue involving the massive American hospital to be built on Clydebank. It will be a blood transfusion centre provided out of NHS funds. There has been no inquiry into that.

There are plenty of subjects in need of discussion and the Leader of the House should suggest that a special Select Committee on Scottish Affairs be set up to consider one of them. We would see how that Committee got on and we could then move on to another subject.

I plead with the Leader of the House not to close the book. He will win the vote, but he will lose the argument. In losing the argument, he may well lose Scotland and that could raise problems that even he does not begin to comprehend.

9.7 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): It has been an interesting debate so far and I wish to contribute to it by talking about the basic principles that my hon. Friends and I believe are at stake. The first principle is how the House deals with Scottish business and the second is how the House responds to the aspirations and political desires of the Scottish people and how it meets their expectations.

Those two principles are closely entwined. If we ignore one, we ignore the other. The integrity of both cannot be ignored because, ultimately, we know that sovereignty lies with the people of Scotland. It is demonstrated by their political will and democratic voice. There is a long legal tradition in Scotland that sovereignty lies with the people. That may come as a shock to the Leader of the House, but it is well worth bearing in mind in view of some of the comments made earlier.

The SNP amendment emphasises the importance of the conduct of business in this place and how it responds to the political circumstances in Scotland.

I was distressed at the way in which the Leader of the House introduced the motion. It seems to us that he was finding a way of riding roughshod over the Standing Orders of this establishment. It seems strange to have Standing Orders if one then proceeds to disregard them. The Leader of the House seemed to be trying to ditch Standing Order No. 130 as quickly as he ditched the possibility of having a nuclear disposal site in his constituency just before the last general election.

It is important that the Leader of the House should take into account the way in which his remarks will be perceived in Scotland, not just by hon. Members but by journalists and the people who read their newspapers.

The Leader of the House should read the article in *The Scotsman* today. It is interesting because it talks about the way in which Scottish business is conducted here and how people perceive it. The article refers to the many interventions by English Members of Parliament during Scottish business since the last general election. The article says:

> "If they want to question the Secretary of State for Scotland, that, they say, is their right; Scots can question the Home Secretary, after all. If they decide not to form a Scottish Select Committee, that's also the right of the dominant Commons party.
>
> And if they decide to change the rules on the make-up of the committee debating Scottish Bills, well, that, too, is up to them and not the Opposition."

The article refers to the increasingly vociferous and unashamed interventions by English Members, to the impact that that is having on Scottish business and how the Opposition parties feel about it. The final paragraph in the article says:

> "Those issues have certainly contributed to a feeling among some Opposition back-benchers, not all of them Scottish, that 'all bets are off' and that attempts to push business later into the night, obstruct business and shun the usual niceties of parliamentary life are legitimate."

It is the arrogance that we see on the Conservative Benches that has led to such a response by the people of Scotland, the Members of Parliament who represent them and the journalists who watch our proceedings. The arrogance that is being displayed tonight on the Conservative Benches is the continuation of a process that is alienating an increasing number of people from what is claimed to be the democratic process. That must worry all those who believe in democracy.

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

As for our scrutiny of Scottish business, I must remind hon. Members of the major issues for which the Scottish Office is responsible. It is responsible for health, social work, education and local government. Policy changes are taking place in all those major areas and large sums of money are involved. These matters must be scrutinised. It is not sufficient, as the Leader of the House said, to suggest that that scrutiny can be dealt with by other procedures that are available to the House.

There used to be a Scottish Question Time once every three weeks. It is now once every six weeks. *[Interruption.]* I am corrected. It is once every four weeks. It just seems like six weeks. That has diminished our opportunities to question the Government. Very few Scottish Members are lucky enough to be successful in the ballot. Other Members, who have no genuine interest in Scottish affairs, put down questions and prevent hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies from speaking.

It is interesting to note that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is shaking his head. He was quoted in *The Scotsman* on Friday as being quite proud of the fact that he had sent a circular to some of his hon. Friends with constituencies south of the border encouraging them to submit questions to the Table Office that could be asked during Scottish Question Time. The hon. Gentleman is totally unashamed and unrepentant, and it suggests that Members with English constituencies cannot have a genuine interest in Scottish affairs.

The Scottish Grand Committee meets rarely. It meets once or twice in Scotland, and in July there is a mad rush when the Committee tries to deal with Scottish Estimates twice a week. That is hardly an effective way of scrutinising the Government's proposals for Scotland. General debates on Scotland are very short. English Members are now being added to the Committees on Bills that consider Scottish legislation. I had always understood that Standing Committees that consider legislation that relates specifically to Scotland should consist of Scottish Members. Even that right is being further eroded. It is not sufficient to suggest that other Select Committees can fill the vacancies that have been caused by the Government's abdication of their responsibilities.

I refer the Leader of the House again to the third report of the Select Committee on Energy. The introduction to the report refers to this Session's legislation and says:

> "In the absence of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, we have felt it our duty to examine the Government's plans for the Scottish electricity industry. However we have not probed the purely Scottish dimension in the depth which would have justified a full and separate Scottish report. Scottish matters are dealt with in this report, but generic references should largely be understood as relating to the ESI in England and Wales."

That Select Committee, which is the exception rather than the rule, stated that, although it tried seriously to look at the Scottish electricity supply industry, it could not do justice to considering that issue. Therefore, we do not believe that other Select Committees will fill the gap. Nor did the Leader of the House suggest that Scottish hon. Members should be appointed to all those Select Committees to ensure that we can participate in them. I give him fair warning that many of us will be looking to participate in those Select Committees whether he likes it or not.

We are deeply concerned about the offence being delivered to the democratic process in Scotland. Essentially, we now have a governor-general with a few flunkeys in Scotland. Perhaps the failure to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs will go down in history as the revolt of the flunkeys. We now have no scrutiny over a man who is operating as a governor-general in Scotland. The real issue is the lack of the Government's mandate in Scotland. At the last general election the people of Scotland spoke very clearly. They delivered to the House 62 Opposition Members and only 10 Conservative Members. That was a clear mandate from the people of Scotland that they do not wish for the Government's policies. To add insult to injury the Government are now denying us the right to scrutiny.

The arrogance that the Government have displayed, not only during this debate but throughout the continuing sad saga of attempts to establish the Select Committee, has created the strength of unity among the Opposition parties which will make life a great deal more difficult for the Government. I welcome that strength of unity of purpose on the Opposition Benches. We are not prepared to see the democratic political aspirations of the people of Scotland pushed around any longer. We are demanding our rights as an Opposition to ensure that there is a Select Committee. It will be a serious misjudgment on the part of the Government if they think that they can get away with it. The people of Scotland will speak again. If the Government have had difficulty with five Back Benchers, they should think of the difficulties that they will have with none.

9.17 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), the leader of the Scottish National party, will forgive me if I do not immediately follow the points that she has raised. We have been debating this matter in the Chamber and through the usual channels for more than a year now. It represents, first, a serious failure on the part of the Government to secure support for their policies in Scotland in the general election and thus being unable to return sufficient Members to the House of Commons properly to discharge the Government's duties in the House, and, secondly, it represents a failure on the part of the usual channels, in which the Leader of the House is a very important figure, to secure adherence to the Standing Orders of the House. That is a very serious matter to which I will return later.

Those of us who have served on Select Committees have greatly benefited from that experience. I have no doubt that serving on a Select Committee gives a focus to the work of Back Benchers and gives purpose to membership of the House that is not easily replaced. It is regrettable that Scottish Back Benchers have lost that opportunity. When I came to the House in 1979 my only opportunity as a Back Bencher to learn about the workings of government was through serving on a Select Committee.

The Scottish Select Committee has been a success. I heard the Minister of State talking on Radio 4 this morning and shedding crocodile tears because there would not be a Select Committee on Scottish affairs, saying what a wonderful job it had done and that it had been indirectly responsible for setting up Locate in Scotland. He rightly said that it was indirectly responsible, and I was pleased to

serve on that Select Committee. Now that he is a Minister he does not want himself or the workings of the Department scrutinised. If he did, he would have persuaded Government Back Benchers to serve on the Committee.

A few Back Benchers have held the Government to ransom and ensured that no Select Committee has been set up. The rump of three out of the rump of 10 are telling the Government what will happen with regard to the functions of the House. We heard the usual speech of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), recounting his past glories and claiming some for the present Session, which I found intriguing. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) made a disgraceful speech. The hon. Gentleman used to be a distinguished figure in Scottish industry—that is what is said in the manifesto—and was a Minister, but he has become the youngest pensioner and has been sent to the Council of Europe, which is a sort of Saga tours for the House.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Surely the hon. Gentleman appreciates that I play an important role in the Council of Europe by looking after the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie); we cannot rely on the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) to do so.

Mr. Hogg: No one could be responsible for my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie).

I cannot be unkind about the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) because he is the last of the decent Tories. He could enhance his reputation by voting with us tonight.

The Leader of the House gave undertakings, which can be checked in *Hansard*, about everything that will be done to set up the Committee. In a debate on 27 October 1987, the Prime Minister seemed to be saying that she foresaw the establishment of a Committee. In that regard, the Leader of the House said:

"I look forward to hearing their more detailed proposals for constructive guidance to the Committee of Selection, and I hope that we may soon see the Select Committee established. I share their regret that it has not been possible to appoint it." —[*Official Report*, 13 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 400.]

Since that time, flexible proposals have been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). The Leader of the House cannot be pleased that his reputation has suffered because of the pig-headed obstinacy displayed by Tory Back Benchers. We understand that the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) have experienced difficulty in serving on Select Committees because they have both been unwell, but there is no excuse for the other three hon. Gentlemen, and it is unacceptable that they should refuse to serve. All that we have heard from them tonight has been so much cant. They have been dishonest with the House and have not said that they do not want to serve on the Committee. This will further erode respect for the Tory party in Scotland, which will be fortunate to have a single hon. Member returned at the next election. I am not as concerned about that as I am about the loss of respect for Parliament and its institutions. Those who are refusing to serve should think before they continue their action.

I hope that the Leader of the House and the usual channels listened carefully to the major contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing). What he said was important, and I hope that the Government are big enough to take it on board.

9.24 pm

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): In spite of the increasing popularity of English hon. Members among Opposition Members, I intervene only as Chairman of the Committee of Selection. Nothing has changed since the debate that I introduced on 13 January. Obviously, it is not necessary for me to go over the same ground. I am glad that my Committee has not been criticised during this debate. Hon. Members understand that the established conventions are maintained unless instructed by the House to do otherwise.

After listening to every word in the debate and considering what has taken place, I have noticed a shift in ground. The idea that one or two English Members may be acceptable was a runner, but, somehow, the idea that all five Conservative Members should be drawn from England was not acceptable. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] For a start, there were no volunteers. *[Interruption.]* I shall let hon. Members into a secret. We use conscription for Committees that consider Bills. In my time, there has never been conscription or press-ganging for Select Committees. That would be a retrograde step.

All my Committee's efforts have failed. The hon. Members for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who sit on the Committee and, I am quite sure, shadow my activities, will confirm that. In November 1977, we set up 14 out of 15 Committees. We would have loved to have set up all 15. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) suggested that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is not to be set up because it would be inconvenient. That is surprising. Most, if not all, Select Committees are inconvenient to Government. That is what they are there for.

Mr. Salmond: Why did the Committee of Selection follow the unwritten conventions of the House in relation to the balance of the Select Committee? It paid no attention to Standing Order No. 130. There were at least 50 Opposition volunteers who would have happily sat on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Sir Marcus Fox: The hon. Gentleman might direct his attention to other Standing Orders. Our most important remit is that the Government shall have a majority on all Committees. That is paramount. *[Interruption.]* We do not want to introduce an element of fear. We have debated that point before. We are a unitary Parliament, and there is no instruction on my Committee to take account of the fact that there are far more Opposition Members for membership of the Select Committee.

Mr. Salmond: Why?

Sir Marcus Fox: I will discuss that matter with the hon. Gentleman on some other occasion.

Any fair-minded person would accept that the Leader of the House gave a fair report of what took place. It is certainly my intention to vote for the motion.

9.28 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Profound democratic and constitutional issues are before us. More important is the issue of our failure to produce what all

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

hon. Members seem to desire. That will be a mystery to the people not only of Scotland but of the United Kingdom. Not one hon. Member has said that we should not set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Every hon. Member whom I have heard tonight has suggested that such a Committee is profoundly to be desired. We have a Government with one of the largest majorities in modern times. The Leader of the House, not in his role as a Government Minister but as a guardian of the House: said, "I have failed." The right hon. Gentleman should take that as a personal failure.

I shall not go into the history of Select Committees, but we invented Select Committees in the 14th century. The Select Committees of the 20th century are not of the same calibre, nor is the power of Government. I must disagree with my hon. Friend, the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing). In Scotland we have an elected dictator, not a governor-general.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): He is not elected.

Mr. Douglas: He is elected by the people of Edinburgh, Pentlands.

Mr. Harry Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Douglas: Forgive me, but I wish to be brief. We have an elected dictator and the power of the Scottish Office is not diminishing, but increasing. The arrogance of the Scottish Office is increasing because it is not constrained.

Select Committees have few powers. The House gives them powers to call for persons, papers and records. Their sole purpose is to report to the House on the workings of the Government. Is this great Government with their massive majority going to suggest in 1988 going on 1989 that all the other Departments of state can be investigated except the Scottish Office?

Mr. Bill Walker: What about Northern Ireland?

Mr. Douglas: The people of Northern Ireland are capable of speaking for themselves. We are dealing with Scotland. We have a unitary Parliament, but it has designed devolution. We have devolution of administration and of the executive, and we have historic devolution of legal powers. Are the Government suggesting that every Department but the one which the House and the Government have decided is to be devolved can be investigated?

This is an issue, not for Scotland, but for this House and democracy. That is why the Leader of the House is making a farce of himself by not replying to the debate. This is not a job for a ministerial lackey. It is a job for the Leader of the House. If he does not reply to the debate, he is not doing his job. If the Minister replies, it will be tantamount to Casanova preaching chastity. It is said that the Scottish Office is not to be investigated. He will say that we should not have this organ of investigation.

Although we have spoken about Scottish affairs, this Parliament had better take note that if the Government can display such arrogance towards Scotland, next they will display the same arrogance towards the rest of the United Kingdom.

9.33 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Despite the giggling bravado from Conservative Members, all hon. Members know that this is an auspicious occasion and that after tonight nothing will ever be the same again.

In view of the hour, I have thrown my notes aside. I want to give one quotation from perhaps the greatest of all Scots, Hugh MacDiarmid. I was searching earlier in the Library for a new descriptive way of talking about a cynical, arrogant, complacent, comprador which is the Scottish Conservative party, the best of which sits on the Front Bench and the worst of which we have heard from so verbosely tonight. I found that description in a wonderful poem of Hugh MacDiarmid called "Hosting of Heroes." He discusses the great heroes of Scottish history and then says:

"What have we to-day?
Dingy parades of vermin!
Details of the English army
In clothes the colour of excrement.
Or processions like that in Edinburgh
In honour of Sir Walter Scott's centenary,
A funeral trickle of Bailies and Lawyers,
Members of the Leith Water Board, . . .
God! What a crawl of cockroaches!"

Hugh MacDiarmid said it—no one could say it better.

9.35 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I start by declaring something of an interest, because I was Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs for some two years. I have no doubt about its worth as an institution and as a means of scrutinising the activities of Government. I genuinely do not recognise the jaundiced account that we have heard of its activities from the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and other hon. Gentlemen.

I can remember, for example, a lengthy and contentious inquiry into the attraction of inward investment to Scotland, and the inquiry into the provision of Civil Service jobs. On a perhaps lesser level politically, but I believe of great importance, was the pressure that the Committee was able to mount in a quick hearing on the future of the BBC Scottish symphony orchestra. It is genuinely sad that we do not have a Select Committee operating as it should in Scotland.

I have listened with great care to the Government's case. Ministers have presented themselves—or some of them have—as men of reason, but they are in an unfortunate situation despite their best efforts. When I shared a radio studio with the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) this morning, he made it clear that it was everyone's fault but the Government's. I find that a completely unconvincing posture—it just will not do.

It is not a technical matter or one of interest only to the barrack room lawyers that always abound in the House. It is a matter of fundamental importance for the machinery of government and how we scrutinise our legislation. The Executive should be challenged and tested, and, if we cannot do that effectively, we shall be all the poorer for it. I feel strongly that there is presently no Government Department where that is more important than in the Scottish Office. It is not partisan to say that there is probably no Department of state that has a thinner claim to widespread popular support or approval, or whose policies are seen on a wider scale and range of opinion as

being insensitive and inappropriate. We really should take seriously our duties to the people of Scotland, to the electorate and to the business of the House.

The Minister of State said this morning that it was not the responsibility of the Government. Of course, I understand his theoretical point about how the system works. However, we all know that it has everything to do with the Government and the usual channels, and how we operate in the House. I take it ill to hear the accusation made that the reason why we do not have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is the inflexibility of myself or my hon. Friends or our general attitude. It is a thoroughly unpleasant charge, and the dreary version of the facts that has been rehearsed ad longum in a number of speeches does not bear even an approximate relationship to the facts, as I remember them.

Of course, I do not hide the fact that we would have preferred a Select Committee that was set up on the basis of the involvement of the Scottish Tory Back Benchers. I believe that the House would have been astonished if that had not been our preference. However, at an early stage, without being indiscreet or revealing what I should not about the usual channels, it became clear that there was a problem with Scottish Tory Back Benchers. Therefore, we made it clear that we would be prepared to consider a topping-up operation with hon. Members who represented English seats, but who had a genuine interest in Scottish affairs, or who were prepared to cultivate that interest. I can honestly say that the only time I, at least consciously, stood in the way of a proposed deal or was in any sense difficult—I believe it was with complete justification—was when it was suggested to me that I should buy the involvement of the Tory Members on the Select Committee by doing a deal that would reduce the number of Tories serving on Standing Committees. Clearly, it was unacceptable. I do not believe that the Leader of the House would for a moment have expected me to accept that deal.

We have been left with the Minister's regrets. The one, simple reason why we do not have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is that Conservative Members will not serve. That is not a matter of regret. It is a cause for concern and condemnation. Given the present state of Scottish politics, it amounts—I say this in cold blood—to a dereliction of duty.

Even if we accept that there were misunderstandings at some point—if there were, they must have come from confused reports about what was happening in the usual channels and about the Labour party's attitude—they have been removed in debates and public statements over a period. If the Minister of State is right in representing the Government's position if he did this morning and if the Leader of the House genuinely regrets that there is no Select Committee, there is now no impediment, except the reluctance and prejudice of Conservative Members to serve on that Committee.

If the Scottish Members will not serve, there is a case for saying that other Members should be prepared to come forward. I do not want to rehearse the argument about what has been happening at Scottish Question Time. I repeat a fundamental point that I made in an intervention. We do not argue that hon. Members have no right to table questions at Scottish Question Time; we say that that right should be used responsibly and not abused as it has been recently. If we are asked to believe that the enthusiasm is not whipped up and is genuine, why is it so difficult to get Members to come forward and sit on the Select Committee?

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) was the only hon. Member to mention that we shall now have lengthy, contentious Standing Committees looking at opting-out powers for Scottish schools and other such matters and they will have on them probably five added English Back Benchers to preserve the Government's majority. It may be that I am overcynical in thinking that they have been "persuaded"—I use that as a technical term used by the Whips—to serve. Perhaps they are genuine volunteers. On whichever basis, it suggests that if there were a will among Conservative Members, even among Ministers, we could have a Scottish Select Committee. Opposition Members—I think that I speak for all parties—believe that that should happen.

The trouble is that the Government have connived and there are serious implications for the whole Select Committee system. An inconvenient Committee has been shuffled into limbo and—I say this in the presence of the much respected Chairman of the Liaison Committee, the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins)—it is a dangerous precedent which is not in the interests of the House. It is a sad history that sums up all that is wrong with the present Government and the way in which they use the parliamentary process. It has become a niggling formality, discharged in a perfunctory fashion. Political debate is all too often reduced to a flat statement of intent which allows no compromise. The situation is made all the worse when the machinery to challenge the Executive's power is virtually scrapped. That clearly was not the intention of the House when Standing Order No. 130 was approved and included the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. I say advisedly that there are points of principle at stake. The Opposition are deeply unhappy about the way in which the Government have conducted this business.

There have been robust exchanges in the debate—sometimes good-natured, sometimes not so good-natured. I may say many things about the hon. Member for Eastwood—that he is unhelpful, unrepresentative and inadequate—but I would not want to call him a quisling or a traitor. However robust the exchanges, they should not deceive anyone about the depth of feelings on these issues.

I am astonished that, given the heat of the argument and the central position that the matter holds in Scottish political debate, the Secretary of State should have chosen not to take part in the debate. It is a major error of judgment on his part.

I recognise that Ministers will have the votes in the Lobby. That is the harsh reality which we have had to live with for some considerable time. But we want to mark our dismay and disgust about what has been happening. We shall do it by voting in the Lobbies, but that is not enough. We shall pursue the matter in the months ahead.

There was an interesting exchange with you, Mr. Speaker, during points of order earlier in which you seemed to confirm my impression that the Government motion contains no instruction to the Committee of Selection to cease its efforts to set up a Select Committee which still clearly exists under the Standing Orders of the House. I want to make it clear that we shall fight for the cause and continue to press for the establishment of that

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

Committee using the fact that it still exists in a state of suspended animation, but ought properly be brought to life.

The contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) was constructive and helpful. There are undoubtedly pressing matters of debate and interest in Scotland where the intense questioning and information—gathering methods of the Select Committee would be particularly valuable and we do not intend to lose sight of that.

I said that we should mark our disapproval in some way tonight. It will probably not come as a great surprise to hon. Members that I have no wish to embarrass or disrupt the House. That would be largely counter-productive and too easily misrepresented. I have no inclination to challenge in any way the authority of the Chair. You, Mr. Speaker, represent the House, and the House is the victim of the way in which the Select Committee system is being treated by the Government.

What I shall do is to ask Scottish colleagues, and Scottish colleagues alone, not to listen to the self-justification and special pleading to come. We do not believe that we can let the matter pass without expressing our dismay at the Government's course of action—their shabby and deplorable determination to undermine the proper scrutiny of Scottish business. I shall not sit and listen to any litany of excuses and I shall invite my colleagues, irrespective of their party, to go with me now from this place and not listen.

9.47 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): We are witnessing another own goal, just as this evening's debate has been an own goal, which not even the long reach of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) could have saved. The whole issue has been one more own goal in the lengthening history of such mishaps that we have seen befall the Opposition since June 1987.

It is plain from the facts revealed by my hon. Friends that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs could have been set up had Opposition Members been more reasonable in the earlier stages of negotiations. The hon. Member for Garscadden, alas no longer with us, spoke of misunderstandings, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out, the Opposition's intractable attitudes were all too clear in the matters that he described.

This is a short but important debate. I should have thought that it would have been a relief to Opposition Members that at last they had a subject on which all in the Scottish Labour party could have agreed, because there is little that unites them these days. But even that fragile unity would probably have been undermined when I said that I share their regret that we have not succeeded in setting up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I share their wish that it had been possible to set up such a Committee, but, as my hon. Friends' speeches have revealed, the fault for that does not lie on one side of the House alone.

It is important to emphasise—I am glad to confirm this to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood—that the manning of Select Committees is a matter for the House, not for the Government. That is fundamental to this issue. The Opposition's amendment is factually inaccurate on that point.

As a Minister at the Scottish Office, and on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friends who are also Ministers there, I emphasise that it is pity that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has not been set up. We would have welcomed it as one more form of scrutiny of Scottish affairs. I believe that we have a good story to tell in Scotland, with our policies on housing, education, industry, local government and, indeed, inward investment.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas)—alas, also no longer with us to hear the answer to his questions—talked of dictatorship, and in the next breath urged the Government to use their majority to force through the kind of decision that would suit him. I emphasise to him and to other Opposition Members, who I hope will at least read the report of our debate in *Hansard* tomorrow, that it was the present Government who established the set of 12 departmental Select Committees —precisely because we think it right that Back Benchers should have an opportunity to carry out a check on the activities of the Executive. It was this Government who brought forward the proposals to which the House gave its approval.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on what by general agreement was an excellent speech. It was well rehearsed and well argued, and it scored one bullseye after another. Let me say candidly that I disagree with my hon. Friend's attitude to the Select Committee proposals, as I have told him in the past. But it is a travesty to suggest that his attitude to that calls into question his sense of duty to Scotland. His record of dedicated and consistent work—in Committee, in the Chamber and elsewhere—is beyond question. Whether on behalf of his constituents' interests or those of Scotland —or, indeed, such important United Kingdom interests as defence, on which he is an active participant—his application has been exemplary, and his commitment and breadth of experience have been of value to the House. Nevertheless, I think that it would have been better to add the Select Committee work to his other commitments, and to try to steer it in what could have been productive and useful directions.

The House is indebted to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the humbug on the Opposition Benches. I offer him another example. Much has been said today about the importance of scrutiny of the Executive, in the Scottish Office particularly, for which a Select Committee would be appropriate. But, if a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is so important now, why was no such Committee set up between 1974 and 1979 when Labour was in office? We had individual Select Committees in the years of the Conservative Government in the 1970s, but no Select Committee scrutiny was thought necessary by the Labour party during the havoc that they were wreaking on the country during their five years of government.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister also recognise that there were no other departmental Committees at that time? The proposal for such Committees came from an all-party Select Committee on procedure and was duly endorsed by the House on an all-party—not a

Government—basis in 1979. All that the Minister is saying about what happened before 1979 is irrelevant to the argument that he is trying to put forward.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman underlines my point. By illustrating that there were no Select Committees in 1974-79, he compounds the felony. The fact remains that the last Labour Government did not set up Select Committees to study Departments, but as soon as the Conservative Government came into office we undertook, and fulfilled, the commitment to set up 12 departmental Select Committees, including one to scrutinise Scottish affairs.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My hon. Friend has missed one step in the argument. The Labour Government refused to allow the Select Committee report to be debated. It was not debated until the Government changed. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who subsequently became Leader of the Labour party, as Leader of the House would not allow the report to be debated because he did not wish the House to have the opportunity to vote to set up a Select Committee.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, whose authoritative knowledge of such matters is beyond question. It reminds me of the occasion when the Labour Government presented the Boundary Commission report to the House and then used their own majority to vote it down. We know the Labour party's attitude to constitutional matters.

I was surprised that the Scottish National party chose to participate in the debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North pointed out, it was a supreme example of humbug in 1979, refusing as it did to take part in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) made no attempt to answer that point in her intervention. The Scottish National party has come to this Parliament to destroy Scotland's place in it, so it has no locus in a debate on extending Scottish involvement in its processes.

I can understand the anxieties that my hon. Friends must have felt about the intentions of Opposition Members towards the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. For a Select Committee to be effective it should seek to be non-partisan in its approach, as the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) so rightly pointed out in his sensible speech. It is a pity that he is not here to hear me compliment him on it. A Select Committee should be a forum for exploring matters in depth and for seeking to inform debate elsewhere, as the Scottish Committee did well in the early years of its existence, when it examined important issues such as inward investment and Civil Service job dispersal. It should not be one more platform for adversarial politics, which it rapidly became.

The Opposition amendment displays a complete failure to grasp this important point. It speaks of the importance of a Select Committee

> "because of the damaging and unpopular policies being followed by Scottish Office Ministers".

That is not what Select Committees are all about. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood rightly said that a Select Committee would have been set up had the attitude of Opposition Members been more like what it was in the early 1979-83 Parliament and not what we have witnessed during the past few weeks. The Opposition amendment shows the increasingly high-handed and intolerant attitudes of Scottish Labour Members since the general election last year. In the past 18 months they have shown themselves to be at best impatient with, and at worst intolerant of, all due parliamentary processes.

We have seen Front Bench spokesmen filibustering on the money resolution on the Transport Bill; the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) invading and disrupting a Standing Committee on the Housing Bill in the last Parliament; and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) damaging the Mace, the symbol of the authority of the Crown in Parliament. We have seen Opposition Members suspended for abusing the procedures of the House; we have seen them seeking to restrict freedom of speech for other hon. Members participating in Scottish business. Only last night, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) caused business to be suspended—not for the first time. That is what the Opposition have done in the past 18 months and that is the measure of their respect for parliamentary procedures.

It is no wonder that my hon. Friends have increasingly taken the view that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs would be a pointless exercise——

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about upholding the Standing Orders of the House, why is he a member of a Government who have failed to carry them out ever since the last election, by not setting up a Scottish Affairs Select Committee as required under the Standing Orders?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman was here when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House gave the answer to precisely that point at the beginning of this debate.

Now Opposition Members talk increasingly about new devices and machinations, about conventions and shadow Select Committees in which, presumably, they will discuss the weather in Iceland or environmental conditions in the Himalayas. Because they cannot win the political arguments they have started to blame the political machinery. If their case about the Committee was to carry conviction they should have shown greater sensitivity to the procedures of the House and greater commitment to the unitary Parliament of the United Kingdom. It is not as if there is any lack of procedures for scrutinising the Scottish Office. There is the Public Accounts Committee and there are the activities of the other Select Committees——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nott[illegible]n, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lang: No, because I am short of time.

There are other Select Committees to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State have given evidence. All those opportunities exist, and there are the activities of the Scottish Grand Committee, with matter day debates and estimates debates. There are, therefore, opportunities for Scottish affairs to be scrutinised.

Despite what Opposition Members have said, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the Committee of Selection have done their utmost to achieve a solution to the problem. No one could have done more to negotiate a solution on the setting up of the Scottish Affairs Committee. It is plain—and tonight's debate confirms it—that a solution is not available. We in the Scottish Office would have welcomed the setting up of such a Committee. Although there is no shortage of other forms of scrutiny,

[Mr. Lang]

the opportunity for close and detailed examination of specific aspects of activity would have been welcome. It is a matter not for the Government but for the House. The motion recognises that the House has not succeeded in finding a way through. I commend the motion to the House.

Amendment proposed, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"condemns in the strongest possible terms the failure of the Government to set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the irresponsible approach of Conservative Right honourable and honourable Members who have abdicated all responsibility for a Committee which is of particular importance to Scotland because of the damaging and unpopular policies being followed by the Scottish Office Ministers; and instructs the Committee of Selection to nominate sufficient members to allow the House to establish the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs under Standing Order No. 130."—*[Mr. Dobson.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 285.

Division No. 22] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, S.
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to order [16 December], to put forthwith the Question on other amendments selected by him which were then moved.*

Amendment proposed, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"expresses its belief in the need for a Scottish Affairs Committee with powers to call for persons, papers and records to ensure effective scrutiny of the Scottish Office and Scottish public affairs; notes with total dismay the lack of sufficient Conservative honourable Members willing to accept nomination to a Scottish Select Committee constituted in accordance with the conventional ratio of honourable Members supporting the Government to honourable Members on the Opposition benches; and accordingly instructs the Committee of Selection to nominate honourable Members of the Committee in the following proportion: five Labour, three Conservatives, two Social and Liberal Democrats and one Scottish National Party."—*[Mr. Livsey.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 226, Noes 286.

Division No. 23] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alex Carlile and
Mr. Geraint Howells.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, S.
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed, to leave out from "recognises" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'that Standing Order No. 130 names the Scottish Office as a principal government department which falls to be examined by a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and states that the committee shall be appointed; notes that the wording of Standing Order No. 130 is mandatory; notes that the Committee of Selection has failed to fully implement the Standing Order; notes that the reasons for including the Scottish Office within the scope of Standing Order No. 130 remain valid; notes that no other select committee or any other available body such as the Scottish Grand Committee provides the investigative weight of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs; notes that 67 Members for Scottish constituencies are available to serve; and calls upon the Committee of Selection to implement the Standing Order forthwith.'.—*[Mr. Wigley.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 281.

Division No. 24] **[10.27 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*

Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dafydd Wigley and
Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David

Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 280, Noes 224.

Division No. 25] **[10-41 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amery
and Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel

Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House recognises the inability of the Committee of Selection to nominate Members to serve on the Scottish Affairs Committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 104(2); welcomes the continued scrutiny of the Scottish Office by the Committee of Public Accounts, and the extent to which other select committees have been and will continue to be able within their orders of reference to take evidence from the Scottish Office and associated public bodies on matters arising in Scotland, and to report thereon; and notes that other Parliamentary means exist for the consideration of Scottish affairs, including the Scottish Grand Committee, particularly in its consideration of Matters relating to Scotland and Estimates for which the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible.

10.53 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that in tonight's debate the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) referred to me. He did not give me notice that he intended to do so, but I have given him notice that I intend to raise this point of order. I understand that he used a phrase which went something like this: "Jocks running around like headless chickens," and attributed it to me. I want the hon. Gentleman to understand that, if I had referred to those events, I would have used much more colourful language. I ask him to accept that he has no evidence for attributing that phrase to me, and I hope that he will withdraw it.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I fully accept that I was mistaken, and I wish to withdraw my reference to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), with apologies.

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

Welsh Rate Support Grant

10.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): This is the first debate particularly involving Wales for some 18 years which has not had the benefit of the attendance of our former colleague Brynmor John. I know that I speak for hon. Members on both sides of the House in expressing our deep regret at his death and his loss to Parliament.

He was a distinguished Minister and an articulate parliamentarian. He represented his constituency and Wales with great enthusiasm. To all of us who had the privilege of knowing him he was a civilised, kind and compassionate man. We deeply regret his premature death. For the past few years he had not been in good health, but, typical of Brynmor, he remained optimistic, enthusiastic and energetic in all that he tried to do. His death was a great blow to his colleagues on the Opposition Benches who looked upon him, correctly, as a distinguished member of their party, but, like all great parliamentarians, he was a considerable loss to the House.

I beg to move,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1989-90 (House of Commons Paper No. 32), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if we take with it the following motions:

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1988-89 (House of Commons Paper No. 33), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 34), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 3) Report 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 35), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that that is the wish of the House.

Mr. Walker: Hon. Members will by now have had the opportunity to examine the reports and my statement to the House on 8 December. Therefore, I do not intend to repeat the details. The settlement for 1989-90 provides a fair and reasonable basis for local authorities to plan their budgets. All the main indicators in the settlement—provision for relevant and current expenditure and grant—are increased by more than the projected rate of inflation for the year. It offers the real hope of moderate rate increases if councils can restrain expenditure to realistic levels shown in the settlement.

It is also important to recognise that provision for capital spending is well ahead too, at 8·2 per cent. Taking account of current and capital together over the two years for which I have been responsible for local government in Wales, provision for local authority expenditure has increased by no less than £298 million, or 15·4 per cent.

Tonight is the last occasion on which we shall plough through the rate support grant process. No longer will we have these supplementary reports, sprinkled liberally with jargon of an intensity to make the sponsors of the Campaign for Plain English give up in despair. From April 1990 we move to the new arrangements under the Local Government Finance Act and there will be an opportunity to debate my proposals for that financial year in due course.

The settlement includes provision of £9 million towards the revenue expenditure which district councils will incur in preparing for the new system. This is about double the Committee of Welsh District Councils' first estimate but, in fairness to it, its first estimate was based on inaccurate detail, I am glad to say pointed out by us. We disagree with their current revision up to £11 million, but I hope that the figure on which we have agreed will prove sensible.

In addition, capital allocations of £10·3 million have been distributed for next year. That sum is precisely equal to the amount that districts say that they expect to spend in the coming year on capital projects related to community charge preparation. It has been distributed in accordance with a method developed and recommended by the Committee of Welsh District Councils, and I am grateful for the manner in which the councils are preparing the arrangements for the new form of local taxation.

Local authorities in Wales know that they have an essential role to play in the task of building the economy of the Principality and strengthening its social framework. I am anxious that central Government and local government should continue to work together to ensure that those vital tasks are carried forward. Positive efforts have already been made, and the initiatives that have been taken are bearing fruit, but there is no time for complacency. We face the major challenge of the single European market in 1992, and county and district councils have a significant contribution to make in meeting that challenge.

Perhaps the councils' most important contribution lies in taking steps to ensure that the services that they provide encourage businesses in their areas to expand and develop. It is local government's attitude to planning, to the education of the work force and to the provision of essential infrastructure that underpins economic regeneration. I am confident that the good work being done by local councils in Wales in those vital areas will continue to bear fruit.

Economic development will, however, be hindered if councils fail to see that very large rate burdens deter potential investors and damage confidence. The need for further economic progress is one of our reasons for introducing the national non-domestic rate in 1990, which I believe will benefit business in Wales.

Taking aggregate Exchequer grants and rate rebates together, the Government have, in the 1989-90 settlement, contracted to meet 67 per cent. of councils' relevant expenditure. They have demonstrated a degree of commitment to meeting the needs of Wales which should now be matched by a determination on the part of local authorities to ensure that rates are held down to levels that provide the necessary services efficiently and at reasonable cost. That can best be achieved if they are lean and fit, and alert to the needs of their communities and the opportunities for progress that are open to them.

I am glad to say that the need for efficient provision of services has been recognised and acted upon by local authorities in Wales. Much has been done by them and by the Audit Commission to identify potential cost savings, but much more needs to be done to translate that potential into reality. The Audit Commission has identified possible efficiency savings of £42·4 million a year in Wales; only 28 per cent. of those savings have thus far been realised. In

taking their search for savings further, I trust that councils will ensure that they secure the substantial benefits achievable through opening up appropriate local authority services to the benefits of competition. I congratulate them on the progress they have made to date, but I think they will agree that there is still a great deal more to be achieved.

Altogether, in capital and revenue, we are talking about not even hundreds of millions but billions of pounds, figures perhaps beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. It is interesting to express them in terms that people understand. My proposals for the forthcoming year mean that local authority expenditure in the Principality will be some £37 per week per household in Wales, of which £25 will come from the Government grants, £7 will come from business and £5 from the domestic ratepayer. That vast local authority expenditure will provide vital services for the Principality, but the sums involved are very substantial.

As I said when I made the original announcements, I have never known an occasion when local authorities or Oppositions, be they Conservative or Labour, have applauded any rate support grant system or settlement for any year. When one looks in balance at the inflationary trends, when one looks in balance at what is going on and when one looks in balance at what will happen in Wales compared with other parts of the United Kingdom, one cannot complain about a situation in which each household in Wales will benefit from expenditure of £37 a week by local authorities, £25 of which will come from Government, £7 from business and £5 from the domestic ratepayers.

The settlement is a good one for Wales. It will make it possible for local government to meet its obligations in providing efficient services, while keeping rate increases low. I commend my proposals to the House.

11.6 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Secretary of State referred to our late colleague, Mr. Bryn John. He spoke about him most sincerely and with insight. That is appreciated by the late Bryn John's right hon. and hon. Friends. He was exemplary as a constituency Member and he always guarded the interests of Pontypridd fiercely. I had the pleasure of serving in the last Labour Government alongside him. He was a superb Minister. He was very decisive, he was always well-informed and he was a civilised man. He was a strong Minister and was always on top of his brief. He always gave a lead. We knew him, too, as a man rooted in his family and in his community, which he loved. Nobody denied that he had integrity and courage —plenty of it—as well as independence and culture. He valued his Welsh heritage. It is no exaggeration to say to the House that he was a truly good man and a very disinguished parliamentarian. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I know that the Secretary of State has not read the document because he has allowed paragraph 9 on page 30 to go out. It says:

"These formulae comprise two straight lines: one of slope 3·5 × PGRE below the threshold and one of slope 5 × PGRE above it."

I could not expect him to read that, but he has put his signature to it and he deserves what he is going to get.

The Welsh counties do not see the settlement as the Secretary of State does. The Welsh counties together are not an overtly political group, although they are shrewd and professionally advised. They are perturbed by the settlement. I shall summarise their worries. They were

"bitterly disappointed that the Secretary of State had ignored their views as expressed in response to the Provisional Settlement and subsequently".

They cannot understand

"how a settlement fixed in the context of comparatively low inflation and interest rates in the summer could still be considered reasonable in the circumstances which now exist".

They also say—and I agree:

"The Settlement falls short by some £37·6m or 2·1 per cent. of the amount needed to deal with identified higher costs . . . and the increase in the GDP deflator from 4 per cent. to 5 per cent."

They also point out:

"Providing for this minimum shortfall is likely to reduce the overall rate of grant from 64 per cent. to a little over 62 per cent. and to cause rate increases to be some 4 per cent. higher than they might otherwise have been."

That is why, according to the Welsh counties, the settlement is not a good one, although the Secretary of State has just said that it is.

The Government have conveniently overlooked the higher costs arising from the legislative pressure of, for example, the Education Reform Act, which enables the local financial management of schools and the reform of the curriculum. Where in the settlement are the prospects for more teachers in our high schools and our primary schools? Where are the prospects for halting closures and cuts in the nursery sector, for the widespread repair, refurbishment and decoration of our schools, and for the desperately needed textbooks, scissors, equipment, stationery, glue, erasers, pencils and Biros, which the worried young mothers and fathers, the parents of the youngsters at school, are looking for? Why does the settlement leave the counties in trouble when paying the police and firemen at 8 per cent., and the lecturers at 6 per cent.?

The Welsh district councils are responsible and representative. They say that despite the efforts that the councils, counties and districts will make to reduce costs, which will involve real cuts in services, spending in 1989-90 is likely significantly to exceed Government provision. They say that they face a stark choice between reducing services and service costs and increasing local district rate levels above the 6 per cent. predicted by the Welsh Office. Boroughs and districts will face great difficulties this year in bringing their average local rate levy increases down to the single figure that the Secretary of State wants and predicts.

Things are even worse than that might suggest. Welsh Office predictions for district councils' spending at the level that the Government want show that all but seven districts out of 37 could face local rises of more than 10 per cent. Welsh Office figures show that 19 Welsh districts—half the total number—could face local rate levy increases of between 14 and 21 per cent. for the district part of next year's rate.

Welsh Office figures show that a number of district councils will have particular difficulties setting next year's local rate and determining the level of local services. There are three such districts in Clwyd—Colwyn, Delyn and Glyndwr. In Gwynedd, most districts are affected: I name Aberconwy and Arfon. In Dyfed, the districts of Carmarthen and Llanelli face especial difficulties. In West Glamorgan, the districts of Lliw Valley and Swansea face problems, as does the Vale of Glamorgan in South

[Mr. Barry Jones]

Glamorgan county. In Mid Glamorgan all six districts face major difficulties; particularly hard hit will be Ogwr and Taff-Ely. In Gwent, problems face Blaenau Gwent, Monmouth, Newport and Torfaen.

Overall, the Welsh associations believe that unless substantial cuts in services or savings in costs are made by councils, next year's average rate increase could be about 4 per cent. more than that predicted by the Welsh Office. If, as may happen, it is less in practice, that will be because local authorities have achieved savings, cut services or found reserves and balances to reduce their rate levies.

I remind the Secretary of State of the deep disappointment felt in the Welsh districts at his inability to come up with more money to help them face up to the challenge of the poll tax. That rankles in Wales. Even now, I ask him to reconsider, because the districts feel badly let down. No one in Wales wanted the poll tax, and the Secretary of State has told districts to implement it without providing them with the money with which to do so.

Our criticism of the settlement centres on its lack of realism. In the main, the right hon. Gentleman has today proposed the settlement that he promulgated as long ago as July. Its defect is that it has not been adjusted for the steep rise in the rate of inflation and interest rates or for the hike in wages and salaries. Our county and district councils are now stranded, sold short and facing demands to do much more on insufficient capital.

The settlement fails to provide for the higher costs arising from the legislative pressures of the poll tax and the Education Reform Act 1988 and from the increasing number of elderly and handicapped people who need ever more provision from social services departments. The settlement is at least £37 million—an important 2·1 per cent.—short of the amount needed to deal with identified higher costs. There is insufficient money to help the county and district councils to advance schemes to regenerate their local economies and to provide more jobs for local people. There is not enough money to tackle homelessness and the rapidly deteriorating and ramshackle housing in many valley communities.

The Opposition do not recognise the settlement that the Secretary of State outlined, nor do the counties or the districts, and soon our people will not. The settlement is a missed opportunity to repair and enhance the partnership between central and local government. It is a major disappointment which, because of its financial miscalculations, guarantees rate increases substantially higher than they might have been.

We have no hesitation in asking the House to reject the settlement and the Secretary of State to think again.

11.16 pm

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): I should tell the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that the settlements made by the Labour Government were not always favourable to local government. During their latter three years in office, rate support declined by 16 per cent. in real terms. The hon. Gentleman should not criticise what, on balance, is a great effort to assist local authorities to meet their obligations.

The settlement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has presented to the House is justified because there are disadvantages in many areas of Wales that merit the support that has been given to the Principality. The amount provided by the Government is a high proportion of the total required, which means that a smaller burden will fall on the domestic ratepayer. But my right hon. Friend will be aware that the collapse of some of the industrial fabric, due to our former dependence on a narrow industrial base, has created peculiar problems. His support for rates in Wales is amply justified when compared with the support that is given to many other parts of the United Kingdom.

We are all pleased to see the amount of support that my right hon. Friend has announced for the valleys initiative. It is one of the biggest contributions that he and the Government could make to improving the fabric of life in the worst-affected parts of Wales. Does he believe that the councils will be able to make adequate provision for the initiative out of the amount that has been allocated to them under the rate support grant? I want the valleys initiative to succeed brilliantly, but I believe that the local authorities may need even more support if that is to be achieved. This goes to the nub of the problem of running local government. Such an initiative cannot be accomplished by central Government alone. It will require formidable support from local authorities and other bodies.

I agree with my right hon. Friend that the settlement is helpful, and I hope that it will enable the authorities in Wales not to levy excessive rates. On some occasions there have been excessive rates. I hope that that will not happen on this occasion because it would not be justified.

11.19 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I wish to add my tribute to the late hon. Member for Pontypridd, Brynmor John. He was a compassionate man and a champion of Wales and his constituents. I got to know him when we were both agricultural spokesmen. He was well-informed and was always pleased to discuss matters with me at any time of day or late in the evening. He was a kind man and was friendly to me as a newer Member. I appreciated that. We feel his loss deeply.

There is no doubt that the rate support grant settlement is well behind inflation, although last July it was level pegging. Inflation next year is predicted at about 8 per cent. and the settlement will not match that. That must be a worry for local authorities affected by rate support grant. Inevitably, it will affect the level at which the rates are set, particularly when one takes account of the current high level of interest rates. What seemed reasonable in July seems doubtful now and will be untenable in 1989. A shortfall can be identified. About half the cost of setting up the poll tax collection system is allowed for in the settlement. Therefore, the settlement is not high enough. Why is it not higher?

The Secretary of State mentioned the national non-domestic rate. Many small businesses in Wales, particularly in rural Wales—shops, filling stations and so on—will be badly affected by the national non-domestic rate. People will be complaining about having to pay poll tax as individuals and the national non-domestic rate as a business. That will hit them hard because many of the businesses are finely balanced in terms of viability. They do not have the same volume of business as that found in some urban areas. However, some of the more rundown urban areas are also struggling. There is no doubt that it

will prove to be an unpopular measure, particularly when one realises that the non-domestic rates will be aggregated —collected in Cardiff and inadequately redistributed to areas where rates are low and where the economic activity is not sufficient to sustain the loss of the current business rates.

I was glad to hear that the capital side of the rate support grant will be at 8 per cent. In the past it has tended to lag behind. There are worries in relation to sparsity factors in rural Wales. I suspect that some of the calculations done by the Audit Commission relate to what is known as spare school places. As I have argued before, many small schools in sparsely populated areas may have some spare places in theory. However, it is too much to ask small children to move from one community to another because alternative schools are 12 or 15 miles away.

The school buildings maintenance programme faces a crisis. Last week I visited the Oxford road school in Llandrindod Wells. It is a primary school; 222 children attend the school. I found that the roof was leaking and that the school canteen was on the point of falling down; it had just been propped up the week before. Too many of our schools are in a similar state. Rain is pouring on to the lunches. That is not good enough. Powys hopes to sort out that problem, but a more generous rate support grant would have been of great assistance.

Less and less support is being provided for housing. It is almost negligible now. Are Ministers able to say what grant Tai Cymru will receive on 1 April? That new body will require substantial support if it is to tackle the major housing crisis in Wales.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is there any item on which the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to spend a great deal more money, and does he have any suggestions as to where the hell it is to come from?

Mr. Livsey: The rate support grant has been declining over the years. A considerable injection of capital is required because the services that are provided to many of our communities have been run down.

Roads in Wales are among the most unsatisfactory that can be found anywhere in the United Kingdom. That is another good reason for an increase in the rate support grant in the next financial year. This is an inadequate settlement. A great deal more work needs to be done in Wales which would provide jobs for the people of Wales. They badly need those jobs.

11.27 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The town of Newport has been uniquely punished by the settlement. Newport's block grant for 1989-90 is to be £5,810,000—a mere £245,000 higher than the grant for the current year, if the council spends precisely at the level that the Welsh Office is assuming for grant purposes. It represents an increase of 4·4 per cent. in grant, which is expected to cover inflation —the Government forecast that it will be 5·3 per cent.— the preparation costs for the community charge, which the Welsh Office estimate will amount to £450,000, and the library service in Newport, which is being transferred in April from Gwent county council at a cost of about £1 million.

Newport is sharply disappointed about the settlement. Just four weeks earlier the Welsh Office published provisional information about Newport's claim. The Secretary of State said that these sums are sometimes beyond the comprehension of ordinary people, but the extraordinary people in the Welsh Office and in Government got their figures wrong to the tune of 55 per cent. The settlement means that Newport's grant for next year will be £318,000 lower than the previous settlement.

The grant settlement implies a rates increase of 16 per cent., if we disregard the libraries. We do not know whether the county council precept is to be reduced. If it is not, there will be a 21 per cent. rates increase. But it could be even worse. The Government's assessment of inflation at 5·3 per cent. appears very optimistic, especially as local authorities are affected mostly by pay inflation. Inflation is running at about 6·4 per cent., but pay inflation is about 9 per cent. Interest rates are high and seem set to remain high for a long time.

The Welsh Office has produced an arithmetic explanation for Newport's grant, but that has highlighted and concentrated attention on the Byzantine intricacy of the scheme. It may be thought reasonable to bamboozle members of the public and ratepayers, but it is not a good scheme if it manages to bamboozle the experts who administer it so that they produce an error of 55 per cent.

If Newport increases expenditure by 5·3 per cent. for inflation and adds the community charge preparation costs, the grant settlement implies a rate increase of at least 16 per cent. The Welsh Office consoled Newport council by saying that it was no worse off than 12 other Welsh councils. How do we square that with what the Secretary of State said about modest rate increases? We have to look to the transfer of the library services and perhaps the Secretary of State can tell us something about that when he replies.

For some 18 months we have had the experience of the Secretary of State for Wales in his intensive peregrinations around the country stirring up a manic optimism which has had a considerable effect in Wales. Last Friday the first national opinion poll showed that since the Secretary of State took office support for Labour has risen by a heartening 8 per cent. and support for the Conservative party has plummeted. There is a record number of Labour councillors on Newport borough council and Labour gained four seats in this year's election. That is not entirely due to the Secretary of State for Wales and his contribution to Welsh life, although he has contributed to the resurgence and consolidation of the strength of the Labour party in Wales. It is also due to the work of the local authorities. The Newport local authority has a splendid record of fine stewardship of the town's affairs, and providing good services at good value prices.

The people of Newport will not blame the local authority for the swingeing increases. They will point the finger for the unreal and unfair settlement at the Secretary of State. He is picking the pockets of the ratepayers in Newport.

11.32 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I too associate myself with the remarks about the late Brynmor John. We offer our condolences to his family, and to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), the Front Bench spokesman for the Labour party, who suffered a bereavement recently.

Last week when the Secretary of State made his statement in the House about the settlement, I asked him

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

why the expenditure sub-group of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance had established a figure for the needs in Wales £13 million greater than the amount he is delivering. We are getting substantially less money than that committee thought necessary to meet the varying needs in Wales. The Secretary of State responded by saying that the sub-group did not include in its calculations the potential for improved efficiency. One can talk about improved efficiency year after year, but there is a danger of constantly expecting squeezes and cuts from local government. Ultimately that becomes counter-productive as the services that are so badly needed in Wales, particularly in areas where incomes are low and the dependency on the services is high, cannot be delivered.

Looking at the recommended settlement for 1989-90, the grant-related expenditure for district councils shows a very great variation from area to area in Wales. The average expenditure per capita is £106. Not surprisingly, the highest is Rhondda, with grant-related expenditure of £146 per capita recognising the very great needs in Rhondda. Monmouth is the lowest, spending £81 per capita. That shows a plus and minus around the mean of about 25 per cent. That is a very great fluctuation. It is surprising that in areas such as Montgomeryshire, with a figure of £81, there is rural deprivation. Areas such as the Lliw valley or Neath, which has urban problems, are well below the average.

As the scatter is so great for district functions, one is surprised at the great homogeneity in the determination of grant-related county council expenditure, to the exclusion of Powys. That is very high because of the rural nature of the area. The scatter of about £535 per capita is very tight. One wonders whether the mechanisms are sensitive enough to identify the needs of these areas and whether those needs are being met.

The Secretary of State spoke about the cost of local government services and about where the money came from. He came down to a residual figure of £5 per week per household. That may not be much in terms of the income levels in the south-east of England, but it must be related to the incomes in some of the poorer areas of Wales. In some of the housing association areas in my constituency the average income is £58 per week. To people on such incomes the figures mentioned by the Minister can be devastatingly high. I realise that such people would not pay the full rate, but even people on an income of £130 a week, which is £6,500 a year—that is the sort of average that one could find in my constituency—will pay the full poll tax. They are above the £125 cut off below which there will be some sort of reduction, and families on such incomes will find this a great imposition.

The Government will find it difficult to sell in Wales the cost of the poll tax administration to local government as well as its impact on those who will have to pay it. There will be considerable resentment.

I realise that housing benefit is not entirely the responsibility of the Welsh Office and does not come entirely within this sort of settlement. Local authorities in Wales will have to face the growing indebtedness of people who are finding it difficult to meet rent arrears. That is having a direct effect on local authority finance and must be taken on board.

The settlement deals with the future, and many social service changes will inevitably have an effect on county expenditure. We do not yet know where the Government intend to take us in response to the Griffiths and Whiteman reports. Inevitably, the Government have had to make some assumptions about that. They have also had to make assumptions about the movement of people from hospitals to community care. What are those assumptions and what additional resources will be given to the social services departments to meet them?

We also wonder about the full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, the so-called "Tom Clarke Act." Sections 1, 2, 3 and 7 are vital and have still not been implemented. Has the money for implementing those sections been built into the settlement? There is no mention of that.

I accept that we have seen worse settlements, but many aspects of this one raise question marks, not least on the capital side. Those question marks are raised when one looks at the state of the roads, schools and buildings and the need for capital expenditure in many such areas. One wonders how long the capital side can be kept down without having to pay a long-term price.

The proposals and reports do not answer all the questions that people are asking, especially the questions about the maintenance of services for people who most depend on them. I should like to see in all parts of Wales less dependency on grants. I should like to see in each area an economy that is strong enough to allow us to be buoyant. We have not yet reached that state, but in the meantime I ask the Secretary of State to make sure that those most vulnerable do not miss out.

11.38 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Secretary of State's Welsh rate support grant settlement is beginning to follow a pattern established by President Lyndon Johnson about 20 years ago. President Johnson made a speech announcing the great society and said:

"From this moment on this Republic is going to declare war on poverty."

Thirty seconds later there was a telegram on the rostrum in front of him from the governor of West Virginia. It said: "Where do we surrender?"

The Secretary of State has said that he does not expect any applause from the Opposition. As far as Cardiff is concerned he is certainly right about that. There is disbelief at the fact that the Secretary of State has said nothing that will resolve the conflict over the missing £2·3 million in the rate support grant settlement for the financial year 1987-88. The Government retrospectively removed it from ratepayers and administrators, although they abided by the Government's rules.

Following correspondence with my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who has more experience than I in these matters, the difference between Cardiff city council and the Welsh Office was narrowed, yet £2·3 million is at stake. Was Cardiff city council remiss in failing to send to the Welsh Office the closed books of its financial affairs for 1987-88? It sent them to the district auditor before 7 July, to the Ministers, to me as a local Member of Parliament but not to the Department. Should the Welsh Office, knowing that the council had closed its books, have shouted across the Welsh national war memorial gardens to the council,

"You have the figures that we need. We are bringing down the shutters on 7 July; you have closed your books, but bring them over to us and you will receive your £2·3 million"? As it stands, because of this nit-picking point, Cardiff's ratepayers will lose £2·3 million. Should we believe those completely unbelievable circumstances? I hope that the Secretary of State will resolve the problem tonight.

11.41 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I offer our condolences to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on the loss of his father. We recognise that it was a considerable burden for him to return to the House today.

This has been a short but important debate. The rate support grant covers the main services in Wales such as education, housing and all the other matters that affect its people. It is interesting that today and a few weeks ago, the Secretary of State used the words "realistic" and "stable". He said that Welsh local authorities would be responsible and would make low rate rises in the months ahead. Having spent a decade as chairman of a finance committee of a Welsh local council, I know that its spending depended on three major factors beyond its control. Councils' spending is affected by the grant that the Secretary of State gives, which is 2 per cent. below inflation, by interest rates, which will rise in the future, and by pay rises. Rises of more than 8 per cent. are more likely than those envisaged in the settlement.

District councils have said for many years that the rate support grant settlement is an annual lottery, and that the money they obtain owes more to chance than precision. The 1987-88 settlement has destabilised at least a dozen local authorities such as Newport and others. The Secretary of State has gone against all accountancy practice and procedure by imposing an arbitrary cut-off point of midnight on 6 July. He should have used the final budget or outturn figures, but anyone with experience in local government knows that it was nonsensical to use the half-yearly review; there was no proper reflection of what local authorities were likely to spend.

By those decisions, the capital city of Wales will be many millions of pounds worse off. My local authority will this year, at a stroke, lose a quarter of its rate fund balances and, as a result of that decision, will have to increase its rates by at least 20 per cent. County councils tell us that rate rises will be at least 4 per cent. above inflation and of the 37 district councils in Wales at least 30 will have rate rises, many of which will be in double figures.

Inevitably under this Government, a great number of those councils will be valley local authorities which, by any measure of deprivation, will most need the rate support grant. The Secretary of State is boasting about his valleys initiative. It is some initiative when the rate support grant is being taken away from our valley councils.

The mean aspect of the settlement must be the poll tax. Local authorities in Wales asked for £17 million for capital allocation to implement the tax. They got £10 million. They asked for £14 million, spread over two years, for revenue expenditure. They got £5 million. They asked for a specific grant to cover the cost of the implementation of the poll tax. They got the block grant with all its vagaries. That is the measure by which the Secretary of State considers that local authorities can afford to implement that tax.

No Opposition Members are particularly displeased that this is the last rate support grant settlement. No one will mourn them. After all, they have been over-complex and, over the years, have been full of jargon and gobbledegook. Most significantly for the people of Wales, the settlements have consistently underfunded Welsh local government. There is not a shadow of doubt about that.

The Secretary of State tells us that things will improve. We believe that worse will follow. Wales will have to face a revenue support grant which, although simpler, is unquestionably more unfair. Wales will have to face a business rate which will give the Secretary of State much more power over local authorities and will break the important link between councils and local industry. Local authorities will have to face completely new housing revenue regimes, which will put rents way beyond the pockets of Welsh people. Above all else, the people of Wales will face an unwanted poll tax which must go down in history as the most unpopular measure in the Principality.

For all those reasons, it is no wonder that the Secretary of State's party lies well down in the polls in Wales. I urge the House to turn down the proposals.

11.46 pm

Mr. Peter Walker: With the permission of the House, I will reply to the debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) on his first appearance on the Opposition Front Bench. He had a much more crowded House than I had for my first such appearance, when I was asked to wind up an Adjournment debate from the Opposition Front Bench. My hon. Friend who led the debate said that he would like me to add a few words prior to the Government replying, to give the Opposition's full support to his argument. As my hon. Friend spoke for 25 minutes of a 30-minute Adjournment debate, it was impossible for me to make any contribution. Although I disagree with much of what the hon. Gentleman said, I congratulate him on his first Front Bench appearance and the lucidity and fluency of his speech.

I join with the hon. Gentleman in extending the sympathy of the whole House to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) for the personal loss that he suffered this week.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside spoke of district councils and their estimates of rate rises, and quoted the Welsh Office published figures in support. I do not blame him for using those figures, because the subject is complicated. However, they do not take into account a range of factors that affect rate rises. For example, I refer to the increase in rateable values, which were up by 1·4 per cent. last year as a result of all the extra business that has been attracted to Wales; the use that local authorities make of money held in balances to the benefit of their ratepayers—they used about £9 million of such balances last year; and the £5 million in additional rate support grant in the supplementary reports that we are debating. A range of factors mean that those figures no longer apply. I am sure that it was said unintentionally that our figures took no account of interest rate increases. In fact, an additional sum of about £14 million has been made available to take account of increased interest rates since my initial announcement. As I have explained previously, higher interest rates do not have the impact on local

[Mr. Peter Walker]

authorities that some might think. That is because much of their borrowings are at fixed rates. Only a proportion of them are at current interest rate levels.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) talked about education, on which in this settlement there has been a substantial percentage increase in capital expenditure. Initial capital outlay has been increased by 17·4 per cent. The hon. Gentleman constantly draws our attention to the difficulties of reorganising rural schools, but with fewer pupils taking advantage of education in such establishments there is sense in rational reorganisation in many parts of Wales. The resultant capital outlay has been met in the figures that we have announced.

An additional £10 million in need assessment has been made available to Powys to take account of sparsity of population. That amounts to £100 for every person in the county. That factor has strongly been taken into account.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) talked about the valleys. The rate support grant system is based upon needs assessment calculations, and the grant is already skewed to take account of areas such as the valleys. On the capital side, extra provision can be made available for certain areas. In this respect the valleys have done well this year, with extra allocations for housing and transport. Allocations have yet to be announced for the urban programme, but there will be extra provision for the valleys.

The introduction of the new business rate in the valleys will bring a benefit of about £8·5 million each year. That will be the reduction of their rating burden. That must be good news for employment prospects.

The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) made his usual vigorous and lively attack on all that has taken place. If he is dissatisfied with the settlement, I dread to think what he would have said if he had been a Member of this place when Conservative Members were in opposition from 1974 to 1979. The hon. Gentleman expressed dissatisfaction with the settlement's relationship to inflation, but current expenditure during 1974-79 decreased virtually every year. There was only a slight increase—it was not large enough to offset the decreases—in the year before the general election. There was a considerable reduction in capital expenditure, which amounted to about 50 per cent. in real terms. I am glad that Newport enjoys an ever-expanding economy and considerable new inward investment.

The Newport library has had an effect on rates. Newport asked for the library to be taken from the county so that is could organise it, which means that it will have an impact on the district rate rather than the county rate. As the ratepayer pays both the county and the district rates, the ratepayer overall will benefit if Newport organises the library more efficiently and effectively. The result, however, will be an increase in rates.

I understand that Cardiff Members are aggrieved that a line drawn on a certain date had an adverse effect on their city. We have now received the final expenditure figures of 31 of the 45 Welsh local authorities, and we know that 14 will have gained grant as a result of drawing the line on that date. Of the remainder, 13 have lost grant and four have not had their figures changed.

It seems extraordinary that not one hon. Member who represents any of the 14 local authorities which have gained from drawing the line in that way has said, "For heaven's sake, do not alter that. Let us adhere to that date." I believe it was necessary to draw the line at a certain date, and it so happens that some authorities have gained and some have lost.

Mr. Barry Jones: Which local authority has gained £2·3 million?

Mr. Walker: I agree that the biggest loser was Cardiff. I do not deny that at all. But the figures were not sent in by Cardiff until long after the date, and Cardiff has been treated in the same way as every other local authority in the United Kingdom. I am glad to say that the rate support grant for Cardiff in the coming year is generous, and I do not believe there is any need for very inflationary rate rises in Cardiff this year.

As always happens on these occasions, Oppositions—be they Conservative or Labour—are, rightly, critical of the rate support grant. I would only say that in relation to inflation and the expansion of the Welsh economy, this is a perfectly reasonable and sensible settlement, and I urge my hon. Friends to support it.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 237, Noes 212.

Division No. 26] **[11.56 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Chapman, Sydney
Alexander, Richard	Chope, Christopher
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Churchill, Mr
Amos, Alan	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Arbuthnot, James	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Conway, Derek
Ashby, David	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Cope, Rt Hon John
Atkins, Robert	Couchman, James
Atkinson, David	Cran, James
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Curry, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Baldry, Tony	Day, Stephen
Batiste, Spencer	Devlin, Tim
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Dickens, Geoffrey
Bellingham, Henry	Dicks, Terry
Bendall, Vivian	Dorrell, Stephen
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Dover, Den
Body, Sir Richard	Dunn, Bob
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Durant, Tony
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Dykes, Hugh
Boswell, Tim	Eggar, Tim
Bottomley, Peter	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Evennett, David
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Fallon, Michael
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Favell, Tony
Bowis, John	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes	Fishburn, John Dudley
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Fookes, Miss Janet
Brazier, Julian	Forman, Nigel
Bright, Graham	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Forth, Eric
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*	Fox, Sir Marcus
Buck, Sir Antony	Franks, Cecil
Budgen, Nicholas	Freeman, Roger
Burns, Simon	French, Douglas
Burt, Alistair	Fry, Peter
Butler, Chris	Gale, Roger
Butterfill, John	Gardiner, George
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Carrington, Matthew	Gill, Christopher
Carttiss, Michael	Glyn, Dr Alan
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Gow, Ian

Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Stephen
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn

Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1989-90 (House of Commons Paper No. 32), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1988-89 (House of Commons Paper No. 33), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 34), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 3) Report 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 35), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Ministerial and Other Salaries

12.7 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

I hope that I need not detain the House for long on this matter. I shall briefly outline the changes that we are proposing and will hope to deal with any other points requiring an answer at the end of the debate.

As hon. Members will know, under the terms of the resolution of 21 July 1987, all Members will receive an increase in their parliamentary salary on 1 January 1989. The draft order which I laid in the House on 8 December determines the revised salaries proposed for Ministers and paid office holders from the same date.

On Thursday 8 December, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), I set out in detail in a written answer all the changes that we envisage. The average increase in salaries in this House will be 4 per cent. and a little over 6 per cent. in the other place. The average for the proposed package as a whole is 4·5 per cent.

All Ministers and paid office holders in the House will receive an increase of £322 in their official salary. Together with the £1,237 increase in their reduced parliamentary salary which they receive automatically on 1 January 1989, they will thus receive a total of £1,559. That is, of course, the same cash increase as hon. Members will receive in their salaries. We propose also that all Government Whips should receive a further £200, which should go some way to protect their position as against that of Back Benchers. Traditionally, the salary of Assistant Opposition Whips is linked to that of Government Whips, and we propose that it should be increased by an additional £200, so that the link is maintained.

In the other place, we propose that Ministers and paid office holders should receive the full £1,559 in their official salary because they, of course, have no parliamentary salary. To narrow the salary differential between Ministers in this place and those in the other place, we propose that Ministers of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries should receive an additional £800 and £400 respectively. We also propose that Lords-in Waiting should receive an additional £200. To maintain salary linkages that we have adopted following past Top Salaries Review Body recommendations, some other paid office holders in the other place will also receive additional increases.

The increases in salaries amount to about £81,000 and, against the background of a 6·9 per cent. increase in parliamentary salaries, cannot be described as excessive. I believe that our proposals represent a modest, fair and realistic settlement, and I commend my motion to the House.

12.10 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South): The Leader of the House said that he would not detain the House for long, and I think that that is right. There is little justification for these increases. I find it interesting, if not ironic, that in the past two or three weeks we have been told by leading members of the Government here and in the other place that increases of £8, £9 or £10 a week in the wages of

low-paid workers are inflationary. Increases in Ministers' salaries of £30 a week are apparently not inflationary and should be agreed by the House.

I should like briefly to refer to three groups of people on whom I feel that this money would be better spent. First, there are the young people, many of whom—if they are aged between 16 and 18—will in a week's time be receiving no money whatever. A few days ago I raised in the House the case of a young lad from Coventry, Terry Flowers, a few days from his 18th birthday. He has received no money from the DSS for the past seven weeks, and has been told that his only salvation is to approach the Salvation Army hostel. His mam is on income support, and because he is 17——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that the motion deals with the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order, and that it is not in order to widen the debate to cover the points to which the hon. Gentleman is now referring.

Mr. Nellist: I ask you to reconsider that decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I were to seek to divide the House on this question, I would have to lay before hon. Members the reasons why I wished them not to vote in favour of the order. The brief case that I hope to make is that there are three groups—among many others—on whom the money could be better spent. That has been seen in the past as a justifiable argument against passing an increase in the salaries of Members of Parliament in this or the other place.

Young people of 16 to 18 who are receiving no money this Christmas are, in my view, more appropriate recipients of the £30 a week increase—£1,500 a year—that is going to Ministers. Terry Flowers was never going to get a YTS place, although the social security Minister said that it was always on offer for him. A 16-year-old with two years ahead of him is more likely to be chosen for a YTS place than someone seven weeks away from his 18th birthday.

Every hon. Member will, I believe, have received a copy of a pamphlet and a letter from the National Children's Home giving a number of other examples. Apparently we, as Members of Parliament, have decided that come Christmas such young people are not entitled to any money, but that Ministers should receive an increase.

In my own city of Coventry, there are young people on low wages, students and others on youth training schemes. Because of other decisions of the House, people on a second-year YTS income of £36 a week—a fraction above the increase that we are discussing—after they have paid rent for a council bedsit and likely charges for heating and lighting are left with £17 a week for food and clothing, even after rent rebates. That is half the increase in ministerial salaries that we are asked to vote for. I could give other examples of low-paid workers and students in the city of Coventry.

The second group that I wish to mention briefly is the pensioners. My early-day motion 204 referred to the case of an 82-year-old former miner in the Warwickshire area. Because of a mistaken non-declaration of a £3 colliery pension in 1975, he has been asked to pay back £10 each week—one third of the increase that Ministers have been offered—until 1996. He is 82 years old, but the Department of Social Security is taking £3,067 off him because of a mistake with a pension. Yet tonight we are asked to give half that sum—£1,559—to the same Ministers who refused charity to Mr. Harry Rider. It is ironic that there is a doctor in Coventry who apparently overclaimed £42,000 in expenses, yet the same Ministers are talking about writing off those expenses while they ask Harry Rider to pay back £10 a week.

My early-day motion 162 deals with pensions as a whole. I would argue that instead of spending hundreds of pounds on Ministers, we should allocate a similar amount to the pensioners, whose £10 Christmas bonus, had it not been frozen over the past decade and a half—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members are intimating that that was not uprated under the last Labour Government. I agree with that criticism. I was not a Member of the House then, but I was the chairman of a constituency Labour party that protested at the action of that Labour Government. If nothing else, I plead guilty to the crime of consistency. If that uprating had taken place, in the same way as the uprating of ministerial salaries, pensioners would receive a £73 Christmas bonus, not a £10 bonus.

The last group of people whom I wish to mention—although I could have picked other low-paid groups such as nurses for consideration for equal largesse and generosity from the Government—as a reason for not supporting the order are the families who face the next five days in the run-up to Christmas with income support as their only income. I do not expect to change the minds of Tory Members, but I recommend them, if they have no other reading this Christmas, to read *The Guardian* of 14 December, and the article by Carol Irvine, a mother of three children who, with her husband Bob, is facing Christmas on the Easterhouse estate in Glasgow. She is trying to bring up that family on £61·19 a week after rent and electricity charges. At the end of a seven-day cycle, she describes how she faces the last day on 82p. Which Tory Member here tonight, if there were to be a vote on the order, would go through the Lobbies with a clear conscience about giving Ministers—some Cabinet Ministers are already on £1,000 a week—a rise of £30 a week, when families on the Easterhouse estate, estates in my constituency such as Willenhall, Stoke, Hillfields and Cheylesmore, and other estates in the country, are expected on the day before Christmas to bring some Christmas joy on 82p?

The House should reject the order, but I suspect that it will not. The House and the country will be the poorer for that decision.

12.19 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I have never understood why Ministers are paid anything extra. Members' salaries have now reached a level that is higher than that of most of our constituents. Ministers should receive the parliamentary salary and be satisfied with that. After all, they have the use of cars, offices and in some cases houses—albeit tied houses—which are part of the arrangement. So Ministers already have advantages. People say that they have extra responsibilities, but I suspect that hon. Members on both sides would be prepared to accept those responsibilities. We are not here for financial reward; most hon. Members are here because of their political ideology. The responsibilities of Government arise from a desire to put into effect these

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

political ideologies. There is nothing wrong with that; it just so happens that the present Government's ideology is wrong.

The notion that we should pay Ministers extra is wholly mistaken and should be re-examined. People might say that no one in the House does anything extra without being paid additional money for it, but that is not so. For example, Standing Committees, whose proceedings are often long and tedious and last all night, are chaired by Members of the House who receive no extra remuneration for it. The only advantage they derive from this duty is that they are more likely to be called at Question Time because they are part of the charmed and magic circle on the Chairmen's Panel.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Does the hon. Gentleman think that people who perform important jobs, such as being the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, should be paid more too?

Mr. Cryer: I am saying that members of the Chairmen's Panel are paid nothing; and that people who do obscure, humdrum but necessary jobs such as being the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments should get nothing, either. I dare say the hon. Gentleman will view what I say with cynicism, but I do the job because someone in the House must examine Statutory Instruments, although it is a dull, boring and often repetitive task.

The Leader of the House will acknowledge that I have written to him to say that someone in the House should examine the codes of practice which are being spewed out by Government Departments. I do not expect such a person to be paid extra for examining them and determining whether Ministers are abusing their positions or providing clear guidance——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: In a moment.

The House and the Government should not mirror the executive market place, in which the only measure of a person's worth and contribution to society is the amount of money he earns. The salaries in the executive market place are astronomical compared with what ordinary people earn in their work places. Ministerial and City salaries seem grotesquely out of proportion——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: When the hon. Gentleman was a Minister in the last Labour Government, did he hold this philosophy, or has he developed it only since becoming a Back Bencher?

Mr. Cryer: I received a Government salary for the two years during which I was a member of the Government. Of course there are inconsistencies—*[Laughter.]* No hon. Member can claim that he has been 100 per cent. consistent in all his actions inside and outside this place. Some of us argued about the narrowing of differentials. The salaries when I was a Minister were very much smaller, and differentials between Members' and Ministers' salaries were narrower. This Government have greatly broadened those differentials.

If we are to develop a greater sense of justice and a better society we must narrow differentials, not broaden them. In a successful co-operative like Scott Bader in the midlands, which has about 200 co-operators working there, the salary differentials have a range of 4 : 1. That is the sort of range for which we should aim in society as a whole. That is one of the basic problems of society and an ideological matter about which we argue bitterly from time to time. The order does not help matters. People will reflect that the Government are out of touch with ordinary people because, for one thing, Ministers are insulated by the huge salaries that they receive.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I have been a trade unionist for many years. In view of what Mr. Delors has said in relation to the Single European Act, with 80 per cent. of power being moved to the Council of Ministers in Brussels, should we not be talking about a substantial increase for Ministers and an 80 per cent. cut in the salaries of Members of Parliament?

Mr. Cryer: "I'm all right Jacques" Delors is a well-paid man. He is on £90,000 a year plus expenses and the other accoutrements of office. He is arguing from a position of enormous income——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: He is making the decisions.

Mr. Cryer: He is making many decisions now, and he claims that he will make many more in the future. I believe that the Commissioners should be paid no more than the members of our Government are paid. No member of the British Government, including the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor, who has a high salary, has a salary which approaches the salary of Jacques Delors. The Common Market is out of touch with reality in many respects, and that is one example.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does the hon. Gentleman extend his argument to Members of Parliament who are also Members of the European Parliament?

Mr. Cryer: This matter is always raised with me. It is an intimidating factor for me, but I will not allow the fact that for the few months until June I shall be a Member of the European Assembly, and receive one third extra salary —[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I do not know why hon. Members say that. I have said this almost every time that I have talked about incomes. That salary is declared in the Register of Members' Interests and, after tax, is divided between the Sheffield and Labour movements. I get no advantage from the extra salary, which I do not like. I should have preferred to have a by-election when I was elected to this Parliament, but that was not possible. But even if every Conservative Member stood up and made an accusation against me, it would not prevent me from talking about incomes or from criticising the Common Market and all its works. I have been part of the Common Market and that has strengthened my view that it is a shambolic organisation. Britain would be better out of it. But I shall not pursue that argument, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it may attract your wrath.

Despite the difficulty that I have experienced in advancing my argument, I repeat that these ministerial salaries are excessive. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) talked about people who experience great financial difficulties. The order will make the Government seem even more remote and

isolated. It will bring home to ordinary people the fact that Ministers make decisions on insulated experience, not on experience shared with the vast mass of people.

12.29 am

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I have good news for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker; my speech will be short.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) used to represent the constituency of Keighley from which he was dismissed. He would have carried more credibility in the House if he had proclaimed the truth. When he was a Minister of the Crown, he accepted from the Crown a salary higher than that he received as a Member of the House. I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House of the advice given by Polonius to Laertes:

"This, above all: to thine own self be true . . . Thou canst not then be false to any man."

12.30 am

Mr. Wakeham: Nothing I have heard from the two Opposition Members has persuaded me that the order is anything but modest.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is at least consistent. He makes speeches such as that he made tonight on any occasion that he considers to be appropriate. He says what he believes. An increase in ministerial salaries which totals £81,000 is not relevant when we are considering a total social security budget in Britain of £52 billion. That is not the way to deal with the problems he sought to raise.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) did not even pretend to be consistent. I agree with him that the salaries of Members of Parliament are more reasonable than they were when he and I first came to the House. I do not think that his view is shared widely in the House, not even by his own party. The Leader of the Opposition and some Opposition Members are office holders who will receive the modest increase if the order is passed by the House. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

PETITION

Truro (Flooding)

12.32 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by 5,193 citizens of Truro whose town centre has been devastated twice this year by flooding. The flooding has been caused by inadequate land drainage provision, which could have been alleviated with the proper resources. The flooding threatened lives and caused devastation and distress to individuals and businesses in Truro. In addition, it has threatened future development in the town centre.

The two floods could have been avoided but the South West water authority does not have the funds necessary to deal with the problem. I ask for adequate funding on behalf of the people of Truro before they suffer further damage to persons and possessions. I also ask for compensation for those who have suffered—many of whom have suffered twice—the distress of finding that their personal possessions, including some of great sentimental value, have been reduced to a soggy mess.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House ask the Secretaries of State for Agriculture and the Environment to make all necessary funds available for (1) a fully adequate flood alleviation scheme for Truro to ensure that people and properties are properly protected and,

(2) compensation for the victims of inadequate flood alleviation provisions.

To lie upon the Table.

Aerosols

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

12.33 am

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I sincerely welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) to his new post. I do so with added enthusiasm because he represents my neighbouring constituency and is my Member of Parliament. His new appointment has given me considerable pleasure, as it will his other constituents.

Last Christmas, my constituent, Darren Robertson—or Barber—was almost 16 years old. He seemed a normal teenager, perhaps subject to the varied moods of many of his age, but not unusually so. His mother had to go into hospital for a while. When she returned home she and her husband noticed a change in Darren's behaviour. His moods became more unpredictable; he was difficult to talk to; his parents told me that they could not get through to him; he did not want to go to school and played truant; he stayed out at night; he seemed unhappy.

Naturally, his parents were concerned. They asked Darren whether he was taking drugs. He said that he was not. There were no extra demands for money from them, so they thought that perhaps that was true. However, they were still worried, so they approached his school and his year tutor. They did not know whether Darren had begun any drug-related abuse.

Darren's parents contacted the local police, but as he was under 16 years of age until February and was at school and living at home the police felt that he was no part of their responsibility. The parents tried the NSPCC, which responded that it was concerned with younger children and abuses against them. They tried the county council's social services department, which told them that this was a grey area. Nobody offered constructive advice to them. Wherever they turned, there was no local assistance. No counselling was available.

On 17 April Darren was dead as a result of inhaling from an aerosol. His parents were devastated, but they have now become very concerned that his death should not be a complete waste. Mrs. Barber, Darren's mother, is particularly concerned that lessons should be drawn from their dreadful experience and that further action should be taken, somehow, to deter and prevent similar tragedies.

A number of aspects relating to this matter are particularly worthy of note. Far too many young people are involved in solvent abuse. The craze—for that is what it is, in the true sense of that word—began with glue sniffing. Legislation made glue sniffing more difficult, so others moved on to Tipp-Ex and other correcting fluids. Stationers became aware of that threat, so more and more youngsters have recently turned to lighter fuels—butane gas—and aerosols.

Every home in the land must contain several aerosols. It is impossible to check their sale and use in the family home. The risk of death is therefore standing in every bathroom cabinet and on every dressing table. Inhalation, followed by any violent physical activity, such as dancing, cycling or running, could easily lead to sudden cardiac arrest and death.

I had fondly imagined that the new ozone-friendly aerosols, which will have taken over by the end of next year, would remove much of that danger, but a pathologist has told me that that is not correct and that the new aerosols can be as deadly as the old. What has become clear is that many young people indulge in solvent abuse, that far too many die as a result—about two every week—and that 25 per cent. die from inhaling aerosols.

Various organisations, such as Re-Solv, have been established, and they do excellent work. Mr. Barry Liss of Re-Solv has been very helpful to me in providing background information. Unfortunately, however, not just parents but many other bodies—for example, schools—seem to be either unaware of the existence of these organisations or unwilling to ask for the advice that they can give. Also, when action is taken, it is not always as helpful as it might be. The pamphlet issued by the British pharmaceutical industry, entitled "Understanding Drug Abuse", contains many helpful facts and comments, but among them I read, in the paragraph entitled "Dangers":

"There are risks but death or permanent damage to the body is very unlikely in most cases."

Whatever truth there may be in that statement—and as many thousands of young people are taking part in such abuse there is probably some truth in it—the fact remains that two young people die every week, a loss which I contend is far too great and which we must try to reduce. Furthermore, 20 per cent. of the deaths occur from a first attempt at inhalation. The other 80 per cent. of those who died had indulged in the practice before—often frequently. Bluntly, we are facing a deadly habit which is destroying far too many young people just as their personalities are developing and their lives are becoming richer and opening up opportunities.

What has been the Government's official response? Much good work has been done, but the feeling is growing that it has all been somewhat low profile. For example, it has been decided that aerosols should not have a warning printed on them as it might encourage youngsters to start sniffing them. My response to that is that once a teenager starts sniffing he or she is likely to continue. It seems that the young already know far more than adults about the temptation.

The only sensible advice is: do not start. Just one sniff can mean that a youngster is no longer a rational human being, and addiction can begin. Perhaps the Government should reconsider their attitude to warnings on aerosol cans. As the number of tragedies continues to grow, surely we are obliged to deal with the problem more effectively. After all, many more are dying from solvent abuse than from salmonella poisoning from eggs, and we became concerned enough about that recently.

I am not trying to be alarmist; that would not help. But it seems that a different and rather stronger approach is now needed. A softly softly approach has not saved the many who have died.

What am I asking the Government to do? One of the main problems seems to be the level of awareness among adults—particularly parents—of how widespread and dangerous such practices have become. First, there is a clear need for a campaign to increase awareness among adults, perhaps through late-night television advertising warning of the dangers and explaining the signs to look for when a teenager is indulging in an abuse.

Even when parents are aware of the problems—as Mr. and Mrs. Barber were—more information and help are required. It is worth mentioning that Re-Solv, together with the Royal Society of Medicine, has produced a video

entitled, "Bombshell" dealing with the problem of solvent abuse. I hope that PTAs and other parent bodies will obtain a copy as compulsory viewing.

Secondly, there appears to be a need for an educational programme for the young, particularly in secondary schools. To avoid the possiblility of encouraging teenagers to experiment, perhaps it should cover more than aerosol or solvent abuse and should include other dangers such as the abuse of alcohol. It should be clearly explained but not shockingly presented so that we can help our teenagers to develop a balanced lifestyle and encourage them to take the right decisions of their own accord and not because adults have told them to do so.

Already there is a virtual wall of silence about such abuses and often knowledge is denied. As most of us know, the teenage years are often most difficult when communication between parents and children is at its weakest. Mothers and fathers are often the last to know, even when a fatality occurs.

My third suggestion clearly comes from Darren's case —more information and help should be readily available to parents. Counselling should be on offer. If parents cannot get through to their children, expert advice is essential. We need to put more resources into advertising telling parents what help is available. It is insufficient for local education authorities to be members of organisations such as Re-Solv. Each secondary school should have at least one member of staff to whom all suspected cases can be referred by other teachers and by parents. That staff member should be able to refer to an agency which will give immediate advice. There should be no need for parents such as Darren's to complain that they could not get adequate help and advice. Furthermore, parents should be told that such a local contact exists.

Aerosol sniffing is part of a wider abuse, a deep malaise among our young. The play-it-down, low profile approach has not worked. Most parents feel that it is not their problem, that it happens to other people's children. The time has come to treat this unnecessary destroyer of young lives as the malignant disease that it is. We must devote more resources to try to reduce and eradicate it. Let us have the courage to debate this whole matter more openly in order to encourage parents to be on the alert. The time has come to be more open about the dangers and the possible solutions.

I can understand the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association writing to me and wanting to play down any warning on its cans. Has this been the right decision? Surely the matter needs to be re-examined. I ask the Government to do more to publicise the dangers to parents, teachers and the young. They should do more to encourage and assist bodies trying to cope with the problem, and we should make sure that practical assistance is available to those who need help. If the Government will do that and accept that a higher profile is needed, there will be much greater public awareness. Perhaps then we shall not have so many grief-stricken parents saying despairingly, "We did not know." If we make progress in combating this evil, our short debate will have been wonderfully worthwhile and Darren Robertson's death will not be the complete waste that it appeared to be at the time.

12.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) for his kind opening remarks and congratulate him on securing this Adjournment debate on this important subject. As a Back Bencher, I was interested in the subject on behalf of my constituents in the neighbouring constituency of Kettering.

The Government are very concerned about the harm caused by solvent misuse. We have all been saddened and shocked at the deaths of nine-year-old Sally Hodge of Bristol and of Mark Ashmore of Killingworth, and my hon. Friend has told the House about the death of Darren Robertson. Solvent misuse can have tragic consequences even for the curious experimenter as well as for someone who has a chronic problem, as the death of Sally Hodge illustrates.

Solvent misuse is a means of achieving intoxication by the deliberate inhalation of fumes given off by volatile substances. Substances misused are many and varied and usually include common household items such as glues, aerosol sprays, nail varnish remover, and lighter fuel. We are aware of a trend in recent years towards the misuse of aerosols in particular. Misuse is generally among the 10 to 19-year-old age group with a peak in the mid teens. For most of those young people who are tempted to try it, thank goodness it is a short-lived activity of experimentation often conducted in peer groups. However, for some, misuse may become prolonged.

In the short term health risks may arise through accidents while the sniffer is intoxicated, from suffocation where large plastic bags may be used, or from the direct toxic effects of the chemical inhaled. Some products, notably aerosol gases, sensitise the heart and can cause heart failure, especially if sniffers exert themselves at the same time. Gas squirted directly into the mouth can cause death from suffocation. Very prolonged misuse, over years, may lead to organ damage or psychological difficulties. However, despite these possibilities, lasting damage appears to be rare. Although tolerance develops with long-term use, physical dependence is not a significant problem. Where psychological dependence develops it is usually in a minority of susceptible youngsters with underlying family or personality problems.

I strongly join my hon. Friend in underlining the point that solvent abuse can kill and that misuse of aerosol cans can cause death at the first misuse. It is difficult to estimate the extent of solvent misuse. It seems to become common in a small area, such as an estate or school, and may quickly disappear, perhaps leaving a residue of prolonged misusers.

The Government rely on St. George's hospital medical school for comprehensive data on solvent-related deaths, which are gleaned from press accounts and followed up with coroners and other authorities. The figures may underestimate the numbers involved. In the latest year for which figures are available—1987—there were 108 deaths compared with 98 in 1986 and 116 in 1985. Although we appear to be on something of a plateau, they are horrifying figures, representing on average two deaths a week. Of those deaths, 31 were attributable to aerosols in 1987 compared with 21 in 1986 and 20 in 1985. Those figures are deeply saddening.

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

The harm caused by solvent misuse has led us to take a number of measures to make solvents less readily available to young people; to help parents and professionals respond to the problem; and to educate young people about the dangers. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough made a number of suggestions, with which I will deal as I cover the present range of measures.

What steps have the Government taken? In co-operation with retailers, backed by the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985, we are making lighter fuel, aerosols and solvent-based products harder to obtain for the purpose of misuse. I am sure that hon. Members will join me in underlining the fact that we cannot prevent dangerous products from reaching the hands of determined youngsters directly, or perhaps through their older brothers, sisters or friends. Since 1985 we have tried to ensure that retailers understand the dangers and try to control the misuse of products purchased in shops.

With help from the Government, Re-Solv, which is the Society for the Prevention of Solvent and Volatile Substance Abuse, has issued clear guidelines to retailers on the sale of sniffable products to children and young people. I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to its valuable work under the direction of Mr. Barry Liss. The guidelines are based on those agreed generally with trade representatives and include full details of the 1985 Act; 300,000 copies have been issued to date. I am pleased to say that this year the Government have contributed a further £15,000 to Re-Solv to make further copies available. We have also contributed to the production of Re-Solv's staff training video, which advises retailers about the 1985 Act. I understand that in 1987 there were 11 successful prosecutions under the Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough raised the subject of the labelling of aerosol cans. I shall reflect on that possibility and write to him, but the label on an aerosol can is unlikely in most cases to prevent a youngster who is experimenting, and who perhaps has been introduced to solvent abuse, from obtaining and using an aerosol. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that there are 30 household products capable of misuse. Unfortunately, aerosol cans are only one of a number of such products.

My hon. Friend is rightly concerned about emphasising to parents the dangers of solvent abuse. Helping parents to respond to solvent misuse must be a key factor in dealing with the problem. I am pleased that the Government were able to make a contribution to the Re-Solv video that was launched earlier this year, which aims to raise adult awareness of the problem and show ways to prevent it. I am told that approximately 300 copies have been distributed. I have seen it and it is entitled "A Bombshell? What every Parent should know about Solvent Abuse." It may be helpful if I place a copy in the Library. I will discuss early in the new year with colleagues of other Departments assistance with the cost of its distribution. The production of the video is a costly exercise, but the Government have assisted with it, and we must ensure that it is properly distributed. I am seized of the point that my hon. Friend has made, and I will pursue it.

By implication, my hon. Friend suggested that the Government should go further in helping with the supply of educational videos. He talked about late-night television—obviously directed at parents. I have noted his comments and will reflect on his advice.

We have sought also to ensure that professional workers have the fullest and most up-to-date information available to them. My Department funded a post at the National Children's Bureau for three years, ending last year, to collate, interpret and disseminate to interested workers advice and information on solvent misuse. Following that, we funded training seminars for residential care workers organised by the bureau, and we are currently funding an information officer post at the bureau. We hope that that post will be filled in the new year and that the officer will be able to reach professional workers such as youth workers, social service workers and those involved in residential care.

The Department of Education and Science has also funded a research project by the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence to produce high-profile curriculum and consultation materials about drugs. Those materials are designed to help youth and community workers respond positively to the problems that young people face with solvents, alcohol and illegal drugs. In 1986, Her Majesty's inspectorate also produced guidance for teachers in dealing with suspected cases of solvent misuse and mounting health education.

Finally, but by no means of least importance, we are taking steps to educate young people about the dangers of solvent misuse. There is widespread agreement among teachers and those concerned with education that teaching about solvents is best tackled in the wider context of all forms of substance misuse. We do not want to dramatise it, glamourise it or isolate it. It must be seen as part of wider education, including obviously alcohol and drugs.

The Department of Education and Science currently funds annual expenditure by local education authorities of over £4 million for in-service teacher training on drugs issues, including solvents, and to employ drug education co-ordinators in every local authority. Most drug co-ordinators now see issues to do with solvents as an inseparable part of their drug education activities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) is present. He, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough and I, representing Northamptonshire constituencies, share concern for the problem. In our county, the education authority set up a team of a youth worker, a teacher, and an education welfare officer to train teachers in what is called personal and social educational techniques. That includes solvent abuse.

My hon. Friend has raised some important and specific suggestions about how to ensure that the message reaches children and about how to advise parents on who to turn to at schools to discuss solvent abuse problems. My hon. Friend has referred to the case of Darren Robertson and the problems that his parents encountered about knowing who to turn to. I am sure that my colleagues at the Department of Education and Science are aware of his thoughts. My hon. Friend will appreciate that this problem is not for the Department of Health alone.

The recent, well publicised cases serve to remind us of the potentially tragic consequences of solvent misuse. However, we must keep the problem in perspective. Mercifully, most young people never try it, and, for the great majority of those who do, it is a passing phase. But that must not lead us to be complacent. We must continue to work hard to ensure that children know the dangers,

that shopkeepers and parents reduce the chances of aerosols and solvent-based products getting into the wrong hands, and that those who work with young people can respond to the problem.

My hon. Friend has done the House a valuable service by raising this subject. I share his concern and will give it the serious attention that it deserves.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 21 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Bus Companies (Takeover)

1. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what safeguards he intends to introduce to protect Scottish Bus Group companies against predatory takeover.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The best way of promoting local control is to have strong, viable companies in which there is a significant stake by the employees or established locally based companies.

Dr. Reid: Is the Minister not ashamed of that vacuous answer? Does he not realise that the real dangers of predatory takeovers are monopolisation and, perhaps, bus firms being run by cowboy outfits? What steps does the Minister propose to ensure that there are some safeguards for the travelling public and for the workers in the industry? In the absence of any safeguards, what kind of competition policy is it that allows even the possibility of a vital public service being transformed into a private monopoly, perhaps controlled by people who are resident thousands of miles away from the customers whom they serve?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It will be open to any company to put in a bid. I make it clear that, while no guarantees as to future ownership can be given, we want as much as possible to encourage management-employee buy-outs. The price offered will not be the only factor in assessing bids. Competition and the extent of employee participation will also be important. Preference will be given to management-employee buy-out schemes, but the scale of the preference has yet to be determined.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Does the Minister have any plans to consider putting in the remit of the Scottish Transport Users Consultative Committee a provision to include buses, in view of the imminent privatisation proposals?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is a Department of Trade and Industry Committee, but I shall certainly pass on the hon. Lady's comment concerning the remit.

Mr. Roger King: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is only right and proper commercially that businesses with a common interest should work together in providing the services that the community needs, either in partnership or in a form of ownership of the companies?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most certainly. I believe that our thinking has developed considerably since the National Bus Company privatisation. At that time there were a large number of management buyouts, but I believe there were only two management-employee buyouts. We are anxious to encourage management-employee buyouts. A recent poll of people working in the industry in Scotland shows that more than 70 per cent. are in favour of them.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister has again paid lip-service to the encouragement of management-employee buyouts, without announcing any initiatives which would give them a reasonble prospect of success. Will the Minister show his sincerity by guaranteeing that those involved in buy-out initiatives will have the opportunity to acquire those companies before bids are invited from the open market? Does he acknowledge that that is what has happened in Grampian? Will he admit that, without the legislation being thus weighted towards employee buyouts, they will be involved in an unequal struggle with the giants of the bus industry?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman referred to Grampian. My right hon. and learned Friend has made it clear in a letter to Grampian that that approval has been given. He will be glad to hear that Strathclyde has come out in favour of management-employee buyouts. Councillor Malcolm Waugh said:

"I am quite confident we will go ahead."

While there is no guarantee, we are anxious to encourage management-employee buyouts. We shall give financial assistance that amounts to an indemnity of 75 per cent. of fees, up to a maximum of £60,000, which means maximum assistance of £48,750. Hon. Members have heard, too that we shall be arranging video presentations and seminars.

"A Claim of Right for Scotland"

2. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received a copy of the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly document, "Claim of Right for Scotland"; and if he will make a statement on his policy towards the matters raised in the document.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I have received a copy of the document. The Government are deeply committed to the unity of the United Kingdom, and we do not believe that Scotland would benefit from an additional layer of government. The purpose of the meeting proposed by the campaign is simply to discuss how to carry forward certain conclusions which have already been reached by the organisers. Since it is not intended as a genuine debate on the merits and demerits of the constitutional changes which they have in mind I consider that it would not be appropriate for the Government to be represented.

Mr. Galloway: Is the Secretary of State aware of the dismay and disappointment with which his reply will be met in Scotland? In the light of last evening's events and his undoubted scrutiny of the media this morning, is the Secretary of State aware of just how isolated he and his Government are becoming on this question? With all the respect to which his great office is entitled, I ask him whether he will begin to put his country before his party?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman believes that the Conservative party is isolated, it appears that he also believes that his Front Bench is isolated because on 12 November this year he was quoted as saying:

"It is the leadership that chose the Front Bench. They dictate the key policies and the strategy. We tried it their way —and it has gone devastatingly wrong."

Mr. Bill Walker: The question refers to rights, but it makes no mention of duties, responsibilities or accountability. It is important that any measure that any Government in this Chamber thinks that they can get through Parliament takes into acount the fact that more than nine of 10 of the people living in the United Kingdom live outside of Scotland. Ministers on every Front Bench who are responsible to this unitary Parliament must take that into account before they bring forward measures to change the unitary system.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is certainly correct. I believe that any constitutional reform within the United Kingdom must be of a type that would strengthen the United Kingdom as a whole. The proposals for unilateral devolution are unlikely to achieve that result.

Mr. Sillars: May I refer the Governor-General to his earlier reply——

An Hon. Member: You should regard him as a friend.

Mr. Sillars: On a personal level, but not politically.

He said that the reason the Tory party will not be represented at the potential convention organised by the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly is that the Government believe that the outcome is pre-determined. Why will he not give an affirmative answer to the request for the Government to support an elected constitutional convention that would be open to every point of view and would not have a pre-determined outcome? Why are the Government afraid to give the Scottish people the opportunity to decide their own future?

Mr. Rifkind: We have a continuing debate on these matters and there is no need for pressure groups to organise meetings to which they give grandiose titles. It is possible for such debates to take place in this Chamber and in Scotland as they have for many years. The idea that some new meeting is required to achieve a purpose that has already been identified by the organisers of the meeting shows how bogus the exercise is.

Mr. Barry Field: My right hon. and learned Friend should answer the sterile arguments that we are hearing from the Opposition about English Members being involved in Scottish Questions by pointing out that only two offshore islands are administered by the English Civil Service—I represent one and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) represents the other. We want to know why it is that the Scottish Highlands and Islands Development Board has such a main line into the pockets of the British taxpayer and why it does so well through the generosity of the Government?

Mr. Rifkind: The Highlands and Islands Development Board——

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the point of order arise out of the question?

Mr. Sillars: Yes. If you, Mr. Speaker, are to call English Members of Parliament, could we have an interpreter because, quite frequently, I cannot understand them.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's question was in order.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been in this House for more than 20 years and I have attempted, on occasions, to raise a point of order during Question Time. This is the first time that I have known you to allow a point of order at this time. Is this now the custom of the House.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman had been hear earlier this week he would have heard my ruling when I said that matters needing immediate attention should always be raised at once.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has always been the position and, as the House well knows, that is the position in debates as well.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rifkind: If I may respond to the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), the Highlands and Islands Development Board has received generous treatment from the Government because we have always recognised that the needs of the north of Scotland are specific to that area and that the area has a fragile economy. It is a matter of great pleasure that over the past 20 years the population of the Highlands and Islands has for the first time for a century begun to increase.

Mr. Dewar: May I say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I thought that his initial response was a series of rather arrogant assumptions about the motives of those involved in the constitutional convention. That response did him little credit. Is it not the duty of responsible politicians in Scotland to examine the possibilities and argue their corner in the very lively and important debate on the future Government of this country? While I recognise that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has a personal difficulty in that he is trapped by the policies of his party, does he accept that it is time that he broke out of the trap and recognised the very strong wish of Scots to have a greater say in their own affairs and in the framework of the United Kingdom? Can I take it from his earlier reply—and I would be sorry if this were so —that he has departed from the position that he has outlined in the past, that his main objection to some form of devolution of power is simply that he is unconvinced that the majority of the people of Scotland want it?

Mr. Rifkind: The duty of hon. Members in this House is to take part in the debates of this House and not, like the grand old Duke of York, lead their hon. Friends out and then lead them back in again——

Mr. Canavan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. We are in the middle of the answer.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman supports the so-called convention organised by the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly and the document which it produced. As a Unionist is he not occasionally uncomfortable associating himself with the campaign document which refers to the Union in the following terms:

"The United Kingdom has been an anomaly from its inception and is a glaring anomaly now."

I can understand why Nationalist hon. Members support that analysis. However, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is playing with fire if he associates with that kind of analysis.

Council House Sales

3. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public sector houses have been sold under the right to buy; what is the current level of applications; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Between April 1979 and September 1988, about 133,000 public sector houses in Scotland have been sold to sitting tenants under the right-to-buy legislation and voluntary sales. Some 4,500 applications per month have been received on average during 1988. This sustained high level of applications is clear evidence of the continuing success of the Government's right-to-buy policy.

Mr. Devlin: Given that in England about 62 per cent. of the population own their own homes as against a measly 42 per cent. in Scotland, does my hon. Friend agree that it is a most welcome development to see recent house sales under the right-to-buy policy and so many Scottish people following the example of the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) and buying their houses under the right-to-buy scheme?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Many Scots now believe that the best landlord that they can have is themselves. However, while 18 per cent. of the stock has been sold south of the border, 13·6 per cent. has been sold in Scotland. If sales continue at that rate, we will reach the 150,000 mark around May 1989.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister will be aware that in communities such as mine where people exercised the right-to-buy three or four years ago, "for sale" signs are now up in the council house windows and many of those houses are going to the highest bidder—*[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Conservative Members to claim that they are trading up. There are 8,000 people unemployed in my constituency who cannot trade up. Is it not time that the Government built houses and decent homes for those people to live in?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I was glad to be in the hon. Gentleman's constituency a few days ago, when I learnt that the Housing Corporation is building a number of shared-ownership houses, which is proving very successful. Research has shown that once tenants have purchased their houses, most remain living there. In fact, they wish to remain whether or not they purchase them.

Nurses (Regrading)

4. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he gave to the Greater Glasgow health board regarding regrading of nurses following the recent meeting of his junior Minister with the Royal College of Nurses and the Royal College of Midwives.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Officials of the board were informed of concerns which had been expressed by the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Minister realise that he and the Greater Glasgow health board are making an absolute mess of nurses' regrading? Will he ensure that Greater Glasgow health board comes into line with all the others in Scotland and gives Glasgow nurses the regrading that they deserve?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has his facts wrong, and he will find that the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives disagree with him. Following discussions with the board, the problems associated with grading in wards where there is only one nursing sister on duty was resolved. I understand that after restructuring is implemented, Glasgow's grading profile will be in line with the rest of Scotland.

Mr. McKelvey: Does the Minister realise that this morning the alternative select committee on Scottish affairs was launched, and that its first subject for investigation is the Health Service in Scotland? In the interests of the Scottish people, will he give an undertaking that he will gladly appear before that committee if required, and will allow his civil servants and health boards to give the evidence that, obviously, they so desperately want to give to that committee?

Mr. Forsyth: In view of the question that was asked a few minutes ago, I welcome any attempts by Opposition Members to make themselves better informed on what is happening within the National Health Service. I am only too delighted to meet any right hon. or hon. Member wishing to raise Health Service issues.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the average percentage increase paid to nurses in Scotland? Will he remind the House also how their pay compares in real terms with that prevailing in 1979? Does he agree that it is irresponsible of COHSE and NUPE members to indulge in industrial action, which merely prevents patients from undergoing the operations that they need?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. COHSE and NUPE signed up for the regrading proposals and were party to them. They did not inform their members of the consequences of the agreement that they reached, and when the going got rough they ratted on the agreement to which they were a party. The majority of nurses have benefited considerably, not only in terms of increased pay, which was recommended by the independent review body, but from the new structure enabling nurses continuing to be involved in clinical work to be rewarded. My hon. Friend is right to point to the irresponsible behaviour of COHSE and NUPE. Fortunately, the Royal College of Nursing behaved responsibly and delivered the best possible deal for its members.

Under the last Labour Government, nurses' pay was cut by 21 per cent., but under the present Government it has increased by 45 per cent.

Mr. Galbraith: I will not let the Minister get away with that. He ought to be condemning those responsible for the shambles in the Greater Glasgow health board, not the trade unions. I shall assist the Minister to be better informed. Greater Glasgow health board was totally out of line with every other health board in the country, and it backed down only because of pressure brought by my hon. Friends. That was the reason.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question, please.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister admit that he knew Greater Glasgow health board would be totally out of line and that he should have done something earlier? Is he not culpable for the shambles in Greater Glasgow health board?

Mr. Forsyth: The Greater Glasgow health board has more multi-sister wards than others in Scotland but has particular difficulties. As I have said already, its profile, following restructuring, will be similar to that of other boards in Scotland. As a Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Gentleman would do well to take a little care in some of his accusations against the Greater Glasgow health board, which will subsequently turn out to be unsubstantiated. In the circumstances it will have to wait a long time for an apology from the hon. Gentleman.

Fisheries Ministers

5. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last personally attended a meeting of the European Council of Fisheries Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: My noble Friend the Minister of State has attended meetings of the Council of Fisheries Ministers as a member of the United Kingdom delegation and was present at the most recent one on 9-11 December.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State, significantly did not answer the question. Many of our European partners must have questioned how seriously the Government took the threat to the Scottish fishing industry at the last round. Unlike his predecessor during the negotiations for the common fisheries policy, he was conspicuous by his absence. Will he do something to mitigate that dereliction of duty by convening a meeting of EEC and non-EEC fishery Ministers to consider a package of conservation measures—other than using total allowable catches as a means of enforcing conservation? That would give some hope to the Scottish fishing industry.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman seems totally unaware of the great success of my noble Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in these negotiations. They have led to the United Kingdom's quota going up from 78 per cent. to 87 per cent. of the total and have involved serious sacrifices by other member states. It was a splendid result for them and I noted that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation were quoted as saying that given the scientific evidence, it was the best possible result that the United Kingdom and Scottish fishermen could have hoped to achieve.

Mr. Foulkes: Why are the Government able to fork out £17 million to compensate egg producers, whereas they give nothing to help the fishermen who will lose substantial amounts of money because of a Government decision?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that quotas for fishermen change each year and that scientific evidence on the basis of the conservation of stocks is an important consideration. He will also be aware that——

Mr. Foulkes: Answer the question.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman will be silent for a moment, I might be able to answer his question. He will also be aware that, for several years, Scottish fishermen have had a healthy share of quotas and have experienced a substantial improvement in their share of stocks and in their standard of living. The fact that it has been necessary to reduce stocks to preserve the species in one year is not in itself an argument for compensation—indeed, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation has not argued that.

Sir Hector Monro: In view of the decimation of herring stocks in the 1970s through overfishing, was it not right, in terms of conservation, too look after haddock fishing this time? Was it not a triumph for the government to obtain 87 per cent. of the catch in those circumstances?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Scottish fish processors congratulated the Government on their achievement. They showed more perspicacity than certain Opposition Members about the long-term interests of the Scottish fishing industry.

Education Bill

6. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, teaching unions or parents' organisations regarding the opting-out provisions in the forthcoming Education Bill.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A paper describing the expected basis for legislation on self-governing schools was issued to a wide range of interested bodies on 7 December. I look forward to receiving constructive comment.

Dr. Moonie: The Minister is well aware that he, his colleagues, his party and his policies are as popular in Scotland now as a raw egg. Will he, therefore, undertake to listen to the results of the consultation and the views of the Scottish people? Will he act on those, rather than on his own political prejudices, or is his sense of honour and decency as deficient as his sense of rhyme?

Mr. Forsyth: We have heard the Opposition saying that our policy on school boards was not supported by the majority of people in Scotland, yet a System 3 poll showed a 2:1 majority in favour of our school board proposals. I note that the Opposition have now changed their position to one of supporting the school boards. On the proposals for self-governing schools, a recent MORI poll in *The Scotsman* showed that one third of the Scottish people thought that parents should have that right. Once again, it is this Government who are extending the rights of parents and the Opposition who are seeking to undermine the rights of parents.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have received a huge number of letters over a considerable period from constituents who wish the Government to give parents the opportunity to opt out? May I congratulate my

hon. Friend on his television appearance when he rightly mentioned that many parents at Neilston primary school are considering opting out because of dissatisfaction with Strathclyde region's refusal to give them a much-needed extension instead of bussing the pupils to Barrhead? Is my hon. Friend aware that shortly after his television appearance mentioning opting out, Strathclyde regional council promptly did a complete U-turn? Is not that the first victory for opting out?

Mr. Forsyth: I am delighted to hear that Strathclyde has changed its position on Neilston primary school. It could be said that that is due less to the power of the media and more to the power of the idea of self-governing schools. Opposition Front Bench spokesmen may laugh, but they should consider what councillor Malcolm Green, the convener of Strathclyde education committee, said about our proposals for allowing schools to opt out. He is on the record as saying that the impact of opting out will be that local authorities will have to look at their provision of education and try to be more responsive to parents' needs. It seems that Neilston is the first positive fruit and that even the threat of opting out will benefit parents throughout Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: As the Minister claims that there is such widespread interest in Scotland in opting out, why has this centrepiece of legislation from the Scottish Office not yet been published? Is it that the Minister has opened his mouth and the parliamentary draftsmen are desperately trying to catch up?

Mr. Forsyth: No, on the contrary, we have stated the basis on which we expect self-governing schools to operate and have invited constructive comments. The Bill has not been published because it is being drafted and we mean to take account of the comments that we receive. I know that that position will appear odd to the hon. Lady who is content to carp on the sidelines and make no constructive contribution towards increasing choice for parents in Scotland.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is difficult to understand the views of Opposition Members who oppose parental opting out, because if parents' views are as Opposition Members say, no schools will opt out? Perhaps Opposition Members take that view because they do not speak for parents and because they know that parents will vote for opting out.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend points to the paradox of the Opposition's position. On the one hand, Opposition Members say that no schools in Scotland are interested in self-governing status but on the other hand they argue that opting out will have a profound impact on the Scottish education system, which implies that they believe that many parents in Scotland will wish to take the opportunity with which we are presenting them. Once again, the Labour party seeks to remove opportunities for choice and to concentrate power in the hands of local authorities and bureaucracy.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Minister aware that people who take a serious interest in education in Scotland believe opting out to be profoundly damaging, divisive, potentially inefficient and irrelevant and, more important, that we believe that it is a betrayal of the real needs of pupils, parents, and teachers in Scotland?

Does the Minister recall his comments in the Scottish Grand Committee on 21 March when he said that evidence of real and substantial demand for opting out would be necessary before he would consider it? Why was that not mentioned in the Conservative manifesto or in the proper consultative document? Why has there been no requests from parents, teaching organisations or from the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities—*[Interruption]* Will the Minister tell us whether this form of nationalisation of education is based on real and substantial demand or is merely the political ideology upon which much of Scottish education seems to be based?

Mr. Forsyth: Thirty-three per cent. of the Scottish people seems to me to be fairly substantial demand. I contrast the hon. Gentleman's stance with that of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) who, I believe, speaks for the Opposition on education matters. He was quoted in *The Daily Telegraph* last month announcing the new consumerist approach to education. He said that the Labour party wanted the creation of flagship schools which would be "paradigms of excellence". He said that they would be measured by objective standards of examination results, truancy rates and the quality of teaching.

Mr. McLeish: This is Scotland.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman argues that that does not apply to Scottish education. Why does the Labour party in Scotland wish to prevent parents in Scotland from having access to schools which are "paradigms of excellence"?

Scottish Special Housing Association

7. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Special Housing Association, to discuss its housing disposal policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am in regular contact with the chairman about the association's activities and saw him on 18 November.

Mr. McAvoy: Will the Minister acknowledge that the Government's housing policies have created great insecurity among SSHA tenants in my constituency? Will he give a commitment that disposals will be subject to majority voting of those who actually vote in a ballot?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Member was referring indirectly to Torbay, I can say that that matter is with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is considering it but has not made a decision. I can give a guarantee that, before there is any voluntary disposal of SSHA property, tenants will be consulted. The statutory rights that we have given local authority tenants will also apply to SSHA tenants. No proposals will be put before them before 1 April. The top priority now is setting up Scottish Homes and the re-employment of staff.

Mr. Harry Ewing: In regard to the disposal of public assets such as SSHA housing, will the Minister and the Secretary of State take advice from my good friend, Wallace Mercer, who has just been added to the brains department of the Tory party in Scotland? He sold one of his best assets for £600,000 and had to get a banana seller

to help him buy it back for £150,000 more than he sold it for. Is that a sign of the future for the Tory party and housing in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member can be assured that, if a majority of tenants oppose the proposal, it will certainly not go ahead. I note what he said about Wallace Mercer.

Mr. Maxton: In view of the considerable alarm and disquiet that have been caused to SSHA tenants by recent bids made by various groups for large quantities of housing, will the Minister concede to the tenants' demand that there should be a three-year moratorium from 1 April on all such sales? Will he give an absolute guarantee that consultation means a ballot of tenants and that, even then, no tenants will be forced to leave Scottish Homes unless they wish to do so? Will he give SSHA tenants the real option of joining the local authority if they so wish?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about a moratorium is no, as we believe that one would be damaging to tenants' interests as they would lose out on considering properly formulated proposals which are in the interests of tenants, consistent with proposals to improve choice and quality in tenanted housing. Tenants will be consulted as soon as possible.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there will be a ballot. With ownership co-operatives there have, to the best of my knowledge, been no ballots, so there are certain forms of disposal where it is not necessarily ideal to have a ballot. At Castlemilk in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, I understand that there was a show of hands. There may well be a ballot, but that is a matter for Scottish Homes to work out. It must work out the details thoroughly. That is still some way ahead—and after 1 April.

Electricity Industry Privatisation

8. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the volume of electricity likely to be sold by the Scottish electricity industry to England following privatisation.

18. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of the amount of electricity which could be supplied to England from Scotland over the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The level of electricity exports from Scotland after privatisation will be a matter for commercial negotiation between the companies. Active consideration is being given to upgrading the capacity of the interconnector so that opportunities for trading can be maximised to the limits justified commercially and economically.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend agree that the proposals in the Electricity Bill, coupled with the moves to upgrade the interconnector between Scotland and England, offer exciting prospects for the generating industry in Scotland? Would he find it a refreshing change if the ragbag of an Opposition thought positively about the matter rather than negatively?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. These provisions enable the prospect of a competitive and commercially oriented environment to be introduced in the electricity industry, and that is bound to have a downward effect on prices for the consumer.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister of State accept that it is enormously important that Scotland sells electricity to England on a substantial scale in the coming years? Are the Government prepared to pay for the investment in the increased capacity of the interconnector? Above all, will he give an assurance that he and his right hon. and learned Friend will not stand idly by and allow the South of Scotland electricity board to write off hundredsds of millions of pounds of investment and thousands of jobs in the Scottish deep mining industry?

Mr. Lang: The decision on whether to proceed with the upgrading of the interconnector is a matter for the commercial judgment of the companies involved. The industry has reached agreement in principle to increase the capacity of the interconnector to 1600 MW. The cost, which may be as high as £200 million, is a matter for negotiation.

Mr. Home Robertson: What prospects are there for the future of electricity generation at the highly efficient coal-burning power stations at Cockenzie and Longannet if the SSEB persists with its policy of burning loss-lead, imported coal rather than honouring its contract to burn Scottish coal at those power stations? Is it not absurd that two nationalised industries should be taking each other to court in a dispute about a perfectly clear contract that was intended to protect investment and employment not only in the power stations but in the pits? Will the sponsoring Minister for the SSEB—the Secretary of State for Scotland —intervene now to stop the dispute to ensure that the contract is honoured and the jobs protected?

Mr. Lang: The upgrading of the interconnector will increase the possibility of coal-generated electricity being exported to England, but the competitiveness of coal is a matter for British Coal to negotiate with the SSEB.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend agreed that the privatisation of Scottish electricity would bring a welcome move from Whitehall to Scotland and provide opportunities for employees, as well as members of the public, to share in the future of that great industry?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The privatisation of the electricity industry in Scotland will create two substantial free-standing private enterprise companies and enhance the enterprise economy in Scotland.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister give Scotland a guarantee that following privatisation, the ownership of the successor companies to the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the SSEB will remain in Scottish hands?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the industries are not in Scottish hands at the moment. However, privatisation will provide for an opportunity for consumers in Scotland and employees of the boards to buy shares in the electricity industries in Scotland. In addition, there is provision for a special share that will enable my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to control the shareholding of any one individual.

Rating Reform

9. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of poll tax which will be levied in Scotland for 1989-90.

Mr. Lang: Our generous revenue support grant settlement for 1989-90 means that if authorities do not increase the volume of their spending, the average community charge should be £267. Indications so far from Strathclyde regional council confirm that our estimates are well-founded.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister reflect a little on an answer given by the Secretary of State earlier about the Union being an anomaly? Does he consider that the poll tax is an illustration of the Government making the Union an anomaly when it suits them, by imposing this unwanted and unwarranted tax on the people of Scotland first, and making Scotland a guinea pig for a method of taxation that nobody wants? Will he say clearly that a major anomaly in that tax is the treatment of the disabled? There will be rebates for the disabled, but a substantial burden will be placed on other sections of the population. What advice is he giving to local authorities that find people unable to pay after three instalments, after which the whole year, plus a surcharge, becomes payable? The Minister is the greatest anomaly.

Mr. Lang: The major anomaly that has hitherto existed in local government finance is that only 40 per cent. of the adult population in Scotland contribute to the local government financial burden. The justice that we are bringing to Scotland, a year ahead of England, is the removal of the unfair burden of domestic rates that falls so unevenly on such a small proportion of that adult population.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that some regional authorities are pushing up the volume of expenditure far above the level of inflation so that, even allowing for the very high increased grant from the Government, they can push up the community charge? Before those authorities have the opportunity to set their community charges, will my hon. Friend remonstrate with them and persuade them to move in the world of good housekeeping rather than of increased expenditure?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that problem. Dumfries and Galloway regional council, in whose area both my hon. Friend and I have our constituencies, will have an increased revenue support grant for next year of 12·8 per cent., just about double the rate of inflation. There is every opportunity for that regional council, as for every other regional council in Scotland, to keep down spending and to keep the burden on the community charge payers within reasonable limits.

Mr. Steel: Does the Minister accept the figures produced by the Borders regional council that show that a poll tax as low as the £126 that the hon. Gentleman forecast would mean its budget having to be 8 per cent. below the level of assessed expenditure need, which is the measure that the Government themselves use? Will the hon. Gentleman explain why my constituents in Ettrick and Lauderdale have to pay £45 more and in Tweeddale £50 more to subsidise the safety net procedure for Strathclyde?

Mr. Lang: The revenue support grant for the Borders regional council is being increased by 13·5 per cent. next year. There is every opportunity for it to keep its spending and the burden on the community charge payers at a low level.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the safety net and I welcome his conversion to the policy of accountability in local authorities. That is why we are removing the safety net. If full safety nets had remained in place, his constituents in Berwickshire would have been £29 a head worse off.

Inward Investment

10. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of inward investment secured in 1988.

21. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet the ambassador of the United States of America to discuss inward investment into Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The estimated value of planned inward investment to Scotland from April 1988 to date is £306·6 million with the prospect of the creation or safeguarding of 4,451 jobs. At present I have no plans to meet the ambassador of the United States of America for this purpose.

Mr. Thompson: Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that since 1981 inward investment in Scotland has created or safeguarded 50,000 jobs? Is not that a tribute to the skill and talent of the Scottish work force as well as a justification for the Government's policies?

Mr. Rifkind: It is also a tribute to Locate in Scotland, which was created by this Government and has been remarkably successful in attracting inward investment to Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that at a time of rising protectionism in the United States, it is the Government's policy to give unequivocal support to the success of responsible American investment in Scotland and the United Kingdom generally? Can he further confirm that we expect reciprocal treatment from the United States Congress?

Mr. Rifkind: That is a desirable objective. The United Kingdom has substantially benefited from being attractive to overseas investment, and Scotland has shown herself remarkably able to attract that investment.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Does the Secretary of State agree that the best record of achievement in inward investment to Scotland in the post-war period is that of the five Scottish new towns? Will he give an undertaking now to leave in place those mechanisms designed to achieve inward investment in the new towns, notwithstanding what else may happen as a consequence of the review of new towns' functions?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the success of new towns in attracting inward investment. I agree also that, in considering the future of new towns and their possible winding up, we must explore ways of ensuring that they can continue to be attractive

locations for inward investment. The consultative document that we published recently invites contributions designed to achieve that effect.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, apart from the qualities of the Scottish people, the reason for increased inward investment is that Scotland is part of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly an asset for Scotland that it has benefited from low taxation, improved industrial relations, and increased competitiveness, which are a direct result of the Government's policies.

Scottish Enterprise (White Paper)

11. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss Her Majesty's Government's White Paper on Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Lang: The STUC has not sought a meeting about Scottish Enterprise, but I shall be happy to consider any such request.

Mr. Clarke: Is not it unacceptable that the Secretary of State, who might have been expected to answer my question, has not formally met the STUC for over 15 months, even though it was anxious to meet him to discuss NEL, Scott Lithgow, Bishopton and other matters? Is the attempt to marginalise active trade unionists in Scotland reflected in the White Paper proposals for local structures that will give far more weight to local employers than to local authorities and trade unionists, who are just as committed as anybody else to training and employment? Does the Minister accept that, since the election, the Secretary of State has not attempted to achieve consensus in Scotland and that the only voices to which he is prepared to listen are those of the discredited, minority far right in his own party?

Mr. Lang: Any request by the STUC for a meeting would always be carefully considered. In recent months, my right hon. and learned Friend has had several meetings with the general secretary of the STUC, and I shall meet representatives of the STUC on 27 January to discuss the economy.

It is our intention that there should be no automatic right of membership of Scottish Enterprise. We want to get the right people as individuals who can best help Scottish Enterprise achieve good results for Scotland.

Mr. Salmond: What procedures will be undertaken for the appointment of people to the new area enterprise boards. Has there been any correspondence, apart from the letter from Sir Hector Laing looking for recruits to such boards? What assurances can the Minister give that the proposal is about enterprise in Scotland, as opposed to the extension of Tory patronage throughout Scotland?

Mr. Lang: That is an offensive and irrelevant question. On the establishment of enterprise agencies, it is for local individuals and local organisations to put forward proposals to Scottish Enterprise to bid for the contract in their own areas. Proposals will be assessed on their merits. Contracts will be awarded accordingly and monitored by Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that Scottish Enterprise recognises employers' key role in training the people whom they employ? It should acknowledge also the existence of the STUC, though the STUC has failed to come forward with positive and constructive proposals, and has been girning. One can only assume that it will not contribute in a positive way.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. When the STUC comes forward with positive proposals they are always carefully considered, as was the general secretary's suggestion that my right hon. and learned Friend should set up a committee to consider the implications for Scotland of the single European market.

It is our intention that about two thirds of the membership of the board of Scottish Enterprise should be from the business and industrial community. Business men and industrialists are more likely to be the most effective at assessing the need for training in their areas and throughout Scotland.

Mr. Eadie: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that some hon. Members are reaching the conclusion that the Secretary of State is reluctant to meet anybody to discuss enterprise and industry in Scotland? Is he aware also that, over three weeks ago, I wrote to the Secretary of State and listed my parliamentary colleagues who would attend a meeting to discuss the Scottish mining industry? Why does the Secretary of State show such discourtesy to his parliamentary colleagues and to the House?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's question is wholly unwarranted. As I have already said, my right hon. and learned Friend would give consideration to any organisation asking for a meeting and so would I. I am meeting the STUC next month.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend ensure when he next meets—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please get on with it.

Mr. Dickens: I am trying. Control them. When my hon. Friend next meets the STUC will he be sure to remind it both of how well we are doing with inward investment in Scotland through various enterprise schemes and of the stupidity of the trade unions in Scotland which cost Dundee the Ford plant?

Mr. Lang: I shall certainly remind the STUC of those points if by then it has not already read my hon. Friend's comments. I shall also urge it to withdraw its opposition to the Government's implementation of employment training. The attitude of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the STUC in refusing to co-operate with that important training scheme has done considerable damage to the employment prospects of young unemployed Scots.

Local Authorities (Economic Development)

12. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from local authorities regarding their role in economic development.

Mr. Rifkind: Representations have been made by Monklands district council and by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities concerning what action is to be

taken in Scotland in response to the Widdicombe committee's recommendations on local authorities' role in economic development. These representations will be considered carefully.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that there is some concern about the role of the public sector and local authorities in the Government's proposals for Enterprise Scotland? Does he acknowledge that initiatives, such as the Grampian initiative and the economic development committee of Gordon district council and other councils, are a useful form of partnership which should be developed and encouraged? Can he give an assurance that when the proposals are introduced in detail they will ensure that we have a proper spirit of partnership between private and public agencies, with leadership from local authorities, and that he will ensure that Enterprise Scotland is not simply a gimmick which damages the promotion of enterprise in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman. If he has read the White Paper he will have noted that it specifically refers to the fact that local authorities are employers and are perfectly free to come forward with others with proposals for the establishment of local agencies.

Single Market

13. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the level of business awareness there is in Scotland of the opportunities presented by 1992 and the completion of the single market in Europe.

Mr. Rifkind: There is widespread awareness of the implications of the single market among the Scottish business community, but we propose to continue and intensify our efforts to ensure that businesses in Scotland are the best prepared in Europe.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Bearing in mind that over 50 per cent. of exports from Scotland go to the European Community, will he constantly remind Scottish firms that they are benefiting from the low-taxation, high-growth economy which is the result of the policies of this Conservative Government?

Mr. Rifkind: That is the case. I do not think that Scottish industry needs to be reminded of it, because spokesmen for Scottish industry have themselves made that point and welcomed the Government's economic strategy.

Mr. Worthington: Is the Secretary of State aware that there cannot be a single economic market until there is a uniform business rate for the whole of the United Kingdom and that the impact—*[Interruption.]* This is absolutely true. Is it correct that there will not be a uniform business rate until after a second revaluation in 1995, and, therefore, not until about 1996-97?

Mr. Rifkind: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity in managing to get away with asking a question about the uniform business rate on a question about the single European market. Unlike all previous Labour Governments who tolerated higher rates poundages in Scotland compared with other parts in the United Kingdom, this Government are the first to say that we intend to work towards a common rates poundage.

South of Scotland Electricity Board

14. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Mr. Donald Miller, chairman of South of Scotland Electricity Board; and whether he discussed the future of the Scottish coal industry.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board on 4 July when, with the chairman of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, a range of issues was discussed. While coal was not the main subject of the discussions, we see no reason why a satisfactory outcome to the present negotiations between SSEB and British Coal cannot be achieved by the two parties concerned. This remains our view irrespective of the court action now being pursued by British Coal.

Mr. Hood: Will the Minister ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider intervening in the dispute between the SSEB and British Coal to try to prevent expensive legal action? Does he agree that political action is far better than legal action? Will he accept that it is his responsibility to consider the consequences of failure? The cost of failure to arrive at a settlement in the dispute between the SSEB and British Coal will be the elimination of the Scottish deep mining industry. Is that to be the Secretary of State's Christmas present to Scottish miners?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are anxious to see a strong and viable Scottish coal industry. Matters of pricing and contract between the SSEB and British Coal are for commercial negotiation between the two parties. British Coal can have a successful future only if it remains competitive.

Points of Order

Mr. Speaker: Private notice question—Mr. Matthew Taylor.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. If the point of order needed to be raised at the time and if it had been raised, I would have heard it then.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the point of order needed to be raised—*[Interruption.]* May I deal with this matter? If the point of order needed to be raised at the time, that is when it should have been raised.

Mr. Favell: It is important that the matter be raised now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On which question does the point of order arise?

Mr. Favell: The point of order arises——

Mr. Speaker: On which question does .. arise?

Mr. Favell: Question No. 2.

Mr. Speaker: In that case I shall take the point of order after the private notice question.

Meat Imports

3.31 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro) *(by private notice):* To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has taken any steps to ensure that meat entering the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland is fit for human consumption.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): There are standard arrangements for port health authorities to carry out checks on meat imported into the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland. Environmental health officers from Carrick district council have, over a period, been monitoring regularly meat coming into Mid-Cornwall Meat Packers, and on a number of occasions meat has been surrendered. Last week the company refused to surrender part of a consignment which the EHO considered unfit. It was taken before a magistrate, who condemned it. We have asked the authorities of the Republic of Ireland to investigate the origin of the consignment of meat sent.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Minister convinced that standards in Ireland are equivalent to our own? If he is, will he explain why consignments of this sort have been entering the United Kingdom in this way? We are aware of the problem in Cornwall, but does the problem extend further? To what extent have such consignments been entering the country?

What reassurance can the right hon. Gentleman give consumers that the meat that is on their plates is clean, pure and wholesome, unlike that which has been imported into my constituency? Can the Minister explain how it is that, on "The World at One" today, the Irish Minister of Agriculture said that he had not been contacted by the Ministry and that it was not conducting an investigation?

Mr. MacGregor: My officials have been in touch with the Ministry and I hope later today to talk to the Minister myself.

Under the EC rules, all meat that is imported from other EC states—*[Interruption.]*—has to be accompanied by health certificates. The incident demonstrates that the effective action taken by Carrick district council should have ensured that no unfit meat enters the human food chain. Several consignments that have come to the company have been surrendered. The checks to ensure that unfit meat does not get into the human food chain—I agree that they are extremely important—are, first, a check by the environmental health officers of Carrick district council.

It is clear that that procedure has worked, and I pay tribute to the work that has been carried out by the district council's EHOs. Since September, they have been monitoring rigorously the meat coming into the company. Secondly, there are checks by EHOs in manufacturing plants to which the meat has gone. Thirdly, there are checks by the companies, which are most anxious that their products are safe.

Also, because of the concern felt by Carrick district council EHOs, they alerted EHOs in all other parts of the country though their electronic mail line. We have checked with the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and I am assured that there is no particular concern as a result of the information that has been provided to all other EHOs. In other words, the EHOs in Carrick have picked

up this problem and, by the other action I have outlined, should have ensure that none of this meat has entered the food chain. That shows that the system works well, and has done so on this occasion.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this incident causes concern as the imports come from the Republic of Ireland, a fellow Community country?

Secondly, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is no evidence that the meat in question got into the human food chain on this occasion?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously, we shall follow up this consignment, like others, with the Irish Government. I am sure that they will be equally concerned because they do not want any negative attributes to attach to their exports. I am sure that both countries will follow up this matter.

The most important point is that the system has worked. The meat has been found and taken out of the system and all the checks worked. I can assure my hon. Friend that there is no evidence that the meat has entered the food chain; we have made sure, through the checks, that it has not.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Contrary to what has been said, is it not a fact that animal health standards in various EEC countries are not up to British ones?

Secondly, the Minister mentioned monitoring, but is it not true that spot checks can be carried out in as few as 5 per cent. of cases at some points of entry into the United Kingdom? Should not that proportion be increased?

Mr. MacGregor: We are keen to ensure that our standards are enforced to the highest level, as I am sure exporting countries are. This instance has shown that we are ensuring that. I have forgotten the right hon. Gentleman's second point——

Mr. Molyneaux: The 5 per cent. spot checks.

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously, it is not possible to check every consignment, but there are careful checks. In all cases there are two checks—that is the important point. The first is carried out by the port health authorities and the second by the EHOs, who are responsible, as members of the local authorities, for the plants in their district council areas. Because they were concerned about the meat in this plant, the EHOs have enforced rigorous monitoring for some time now. That has ensured that any meat thought to be unfit in any way has been surrendered or, as I said, condemned by a magistrate in this case.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Can my right hon. Friend clear up one point? Does the check at the port of entry merely consist of ensuring that there is a valid certificate, or does it look behind the certificate and check that it has been issued to a consignment that complies with it? Clearly, false certificates were issued in these cases. That is an important point. It shows that we cannot rely on the certificates.

Mr. MacGregor: The check is done on the certificates. One of the problems is for EHOs, who carry out the main check to determine wether meat is unfit for consumption, to be certain whether it became unfit after or before it entered the country. That point has been checked on some of the meat consignments that came into this plant.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): The Minister will be aware that many meat producers in this country will be very concerned about the possible spead of the effect of the news about this incident—particularly those in my area, the Grampian region, which is one of the largest meat production areas in the country. What assurance can he give the British public that the meat which they expect to be wholesome actually is?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is on exactly the right point. The checks that worked in this case are clear evidence that the system works. Effective action taken by the district council should have ensured that no unfit meat has entered the food chain from this source. We all know about the excellent standards of Scottish meat. The real lesson of this episode is that the system works: that is the best guarantee for consumers.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Did the meat in question, coming from Ireland, come from EEC-approved abattoirs or from abattoirs of the lower standard accepted by the Irish? As we approach 1992, it is very important that all abattoirs in the Community should be up to the higher EEC standards, and it is insufficient to accept the lower domestic standards.

Mr. MacGregor: If it was exported from another Community country, it would have had to be from an abattoir that was export-approved. My hon. Friend is right on the wider question of 1992: it is important that all abattoirs are brought up to the same standard. That is part of the discussion that is taking place on all matters relating to 1992.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Yns Môn): The Minister referred to the way in which checks were carried out effectively in Cornwall. Will he also bear in mind the fact that checks are made at points of entry, such as Holyhead in my constituency, by very efficient and hard-working environmental health officers? Will he recognise that last year they carried out extensive checks at the port and found no contaminated meat? That should be a reasonable assurance for our meat consumers.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that the points that he has made will get wide circulation. I should like to pay tribute to all those who are involved in ensuring that our food is safe. That includes EHOs, people at the ports and many others who work extremely hard to ensure that that is so. In an isolated case of this kind, it is doubly reassuring to be able to say what I said earlier, that there is no evidence that the meat has entered the food chain. Enormous imports and exports and food processing are taking place all the time, and the hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the work of all those people and to the fact that there are so few incidents of this kind.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Is it not true that environmental health officers have been present in this plant since September monitoring all the consignments coming into it? Does that not show that no contaminated consignments have got through into the food chain? Has my right hon. Friend received any suggestion from other parts of the country that there have been complaints about contaminated meat?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The answer to his last question is that the EHOs did an

[Mr. MacGregor]

exemplary job in warning all other EHOs of what they were finding in this case. The fact that we have not been able to find any other similar evidence shows that the system was working extremely well. The lesson from this case is that the EHOs in Carrick district council were doing a splendid job. The fact that they were monitoring the meat so carefully since September should be another reassurance.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): While the Minister repeatedly says that the system is working—given this discovery, one obviously would say it is—whose laws are we under? Are we under the laws of the EEC or the laws of this Parliament? I remind the Secretary of State that a distinguished Member of this House, Norman Atkinson, who sadly is no longer here, introduced a Bill some years ago specifically on the issue of the quality and kind of meat that could be sold to the general public. That became the law of this country.

If we are operating under our own laws, the general public would know that they were safeguarded and would have total confidence in them. However, if they are laws imposed by the EEC, then, in view of comments made by Conservative Members, surely it is time that we made clearly known that our safeguards will be stringently imposed irrespective of the origin of our meat imports.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, our safeguards are stringently imposed. We apply the highest possible practices. It is equally desirable that the same levels and standards should apply throughout the Community. When one is dealing with intra-Community trade, one obviously operates within EC rules. As I say, we are endeavouring to ensure that the EC rules apply the highest standards. That is happening in the case of exporting abattoirs. They now have to meet the EC rules.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am sure that the whole House and the general public will be reassured by my right hon. Friend's statement. He will be aware that, as we move towards 1992, we will become more and more dependent upon the inspection that is carried out in the exporting countries. Will he take this opportunity to remind our brothers in Europe that they must get their act together if they are to retain the confidence of the British public in the products that they consume from other Community countries?

Mr. MacGregor: I know that my hon. Friend has extensive knowledge of the meat industry. I can give him the assurance that, between now and 1992, I shall do precisely as he wishes in all the discussions which I have on these matters. I shall make the same point in my discussion with my fellow Minister in the Republic of Ireland. I am sure that he will be as concerned as I am to ensure that Irish exports are of a high standard, because that is obviously of great importance to him in terms of Irish exports.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question and I must have regard to the important debate to follow, in which many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part. I shall take two more questions from each side of the House.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the answer which the Minister just gave, can he explain why he said earlier that he had not yet talked to the Irish Minister of Agriculture? In view of the communication difficulties which we have had with the Republic over the Ryan case, and in view of the incompetence which the Minister has shown over the egg fiasco, would it not have been common decency, let alone common sense, to talk to the Irish Minister first?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that that is a rather pointless question. My Ministry has been in touch and I shall be in touch later this afternoon. Last week, I had a good series of discussions with my Irish colleague on an issue which is important to many plants in this country in relation to the Scotch whisky industry. Those discussions led to his seeing our point of view and removing an objection he had. That was of great importance to the Scotch whisky industry. I have been in pretty constant communication with him during the past week. The moment that I can get hold of him, I shall talk to him about this incident.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The private notice question is about meat, even though it is Christmas.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the meat was contaminated when it entered this country, it is 99·9 per cent. certain that it was contaminated when it was in Ireland?

Mr. MacGregor: The EHOs and my Ministry are investigating to establish exactly when the contamination occurred. That is obviously one of the difficulties. It is certainly one of the points that we are pursuing.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I note the Minister's fulsome praise for the environmental health officers. Can he assure the House that there are enough such officers to carry out a 100 per cent. inspection of meat? Are there not dotted across the country small abattoirs which are difficult to control? Is it not about time that we had a look at this problem?

Mr. MacGregor: That is obviously not a direct matter for me. The example of this case shows that those officers are doing a good job.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): In view of the alarming reports circulating about animal and poultry feed, can my right hon. Friend assure the House that the source of the beef feed was not in any way contaminated? What action has he taken to ensure that animal and poultry feed is properly processed and is not likely to cause this kind of problem?

Mr. MacGregor: Animal feed in this country is certainly properly controlled. I have announced the further steps that we intend to take. I do not at this stage know the source of the feed that was given to these animals.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): May I gently remind the Minister that the second "F" in "MAFF" is supposed to stand for "Food". How can it be possible for contaminated meat to be diverted towards the public food supply? Will the right hon. Gentleman take immediate action to make the local, national, and, most important, international system of inspection and control work

properly now and after 1992? We are grateful for the categorical assurance that none of the contaminated meat has got into the public food supply. I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would assure us that anyone who may have attempted to commit that offence will be brought to book by the relevant authorities.

Events over the past two weeks demonstrate a disturbing failure by Ministers to maintain proper health standards in the nation's food. The proof of that is in the eating, with a doubling of salmonella food poisoning cases over the past three years, up to 39,000. We are grateful to Carrick district council for doing its work properly. I wish we had the same confidence in Ministers.

Mr. MacGregor: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that this was a case of the system working properly, as it does very often in this country. My Department, too, acted immediately it received the information. We followed up the matter straight away. That is evidence of not only the local authority working properly, but also my Department.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that the amount of effort and resources that we have put into the food side of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has increased during recent years, and will continue to increase. I assure the hon. Gentleman, too, that during the past 18 months, I have been spending a great deal of my time—both in this country and in the European Community—on food matters, food legislation, food hygiene and food safety.

Points of Order

3.50 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your help and guidance, Mr. Speaker, on the question of the Court of Auditors report, which was published last Tuesday, 13 December, not being available in the Vote Office. That is one of the most important EEC documents published in the year, and, according to press reports, it contains widespread reports of fraud, of inadequate cover of expenditure and of illegal expenditure of money passed and approved by the House.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that "Erskine May" makes it abundantly clear that we should treat such documents as parliamentary documents, and in fact the same guidance is given in the House of Commons guidance.

You will be aware, Sir, that I raised this point at business questions last Thursday. I appealed to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to ensure that this document was made available. There has been report after report in the newspapers, and yesterday in *The Daily Telegraph* there was a detailed leader article making specific reference to the report. It is a shameful insult to the Court of Auditors that this document should be issued to the press but not to Members of Parliament, and that this document, which is vital to public expenditure, is treated in such a way that Members of Parliament cannot obtain it, although I and other hon. Members have asked for it every day.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Can I raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Skinner: This matter is exceptionally important. We have just been discussing a matter which in many ways is connected with fraud in the Common Market. You will be aware that the Court of Auditors report last time, which went before the Public Accounts Committee, stated that there was a Common Market fraud—referred to in this document, too—called the "roundabout scheme". That scheme enables meat to be transferred backwards and forwards over national boundaries—into the fridge, out of the fridge and back into the fridge—with the result that massive amounts of money are made every time that meat crosses a national boundary. It is significant that on this day, when we are complaining about fraud and the Court of Auditors report not being available, we should also be discussing the question of rotten meat. I believe that those two matters go well together.

It is important that the Ministry of Agriculture—as well as yourself, Mr. Speaker—investigates this matter and the way in which this meat is being transferred time and time again——

Mr. MacGregor *indicated assent.*

Mr. Skinner: —and look into the fraud while the right hon. Gentleman is at it.

Mr. Speaker: May I first of all congratulate the hon. Gentleman on getting his point of order absolutely in order.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) gave me notice of his point of order, for which I am grateful, because it has given me the opportunity to look into it. I am always concerned when hon. Members are unable to obtain papers which they need for a debate, and I have looked into the matter. I understand that the Vote Office copies of the Court of Auditors report are in transit by air freight. The Library's two copies arrived by post. The Vote Office is making inquiries about its consignment. I trust that the hon. Gentleman will soon receive his copy. I cannot explain why the post was quicker than the air.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you have had notice of an intention of the Department of Education and Science to make a statement. If not, my information is that the DES has planted a parliamentary answer which gives notification of the amounts of money on capital expenditure in education. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you have no direct control over Ministers, but I believe that it is important on these issues that the Government should not arrange planted PQs on the last day before a recess, because that gives no opportunity for consideration, especially by hon. Members such as myself, with important constituency interests—we have 500 temporary classrooms in Bradford. I understand that the PQ will announce that the trend in decline in capital expenditure will continue.

It will be impossible for Bradford to replace some of the much-needed temporary classrooms, whose replacement has been desperately needed for many years. Therefore, I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will use your influence to stop not only the DES, but the Department of Health, which has also put down a planted answer, from carrying out this nefarious practice, which avoids parliamentary accountability and scrutiny and robs hon. Members on both sides of the House of the right to ask questions of Ministers to discover what they are about.

Mr. Speaker: Again, I have sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says. We are coming towards the Christmas recess, and I am sure that what he has said will have been heard by those on the Front Bench. I will now take the point of order from Mr. Favell.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I tried to raise a point of order at the end of the second question during Scottish Questions because you had taken two points of order from Opposition parties —one from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), who represents the Scottish National party, and the other from the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) who represents the Scottish Labour party. Is there a special practice during Scottish Questions, or do you intend to return to your usual practice of not taking points of order during questions?

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, would you make it perfectly clear to the Opposition parties that hon. Members representing other parts of the United Kingdom have the right to be heard during Scottish questions without being shouted down? Those hon. Members who are deeply committed to the Union have a special right to be heard, particularly as the Union is coming under increasing threat from many Opposition Members who seem dedicated to achieving a Socialist state at any cost.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) was here earlier in the week —I hope that he was—when this matter was dealt with. I will deal with it yet again.

If a matter needs the immediate attention of the Chair, it should be raised immediately as a point of order even during Question Time. If it is a point of order arising out of questions later on, which the hon. Gentleman sought to raise, he knows perfectly well that, as I explained last year, points of order arising out of Question Time are always taken at their proper time, which is now, after private notice questions or after a statement. I am sorry that I did not see the hon. Gentleman, and I apologise to him.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take Mr. Dalyell first.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has been brought to your attention that the *Hansard* published today records that, yesterday morning, at 5.45 am, I suggested that the new vice-president of the European Community had rendered the supreme service of silence to the Prime Minister. The House was then suspended by the Chairman of Ways and Means.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that the Clerk of the Journals has written a letter to say that there is no direct precedent for that action. I wonder if you would care to make a statement on this?

Mr. Speaker: I am not aware that the Clerk of the Journals has written a letter, but there are plenty of precedents; the hon. Gentleman need only look at page 314 of "Erskine May". There are frequently occasions when the Chair considers that an informal suspension would be for the convenience of the House and many examples have been given.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is not the practice for the Speaker to comment on what has taken place when not in the chair. The incident to which he referred was dealt with well by the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Mr. Skinner: On that matter——

Hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Aitken: Further to the important point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), Mr. Speaker. I respectfully urge you to look behind the explanation given to the Vote Office, or whatever source, about the Christmas mail and the air freight schedules. I ask you to concentrate upon the real gut issue, the increasing contempt shown by certain European institutions towards this House and this Parliament.

This important Court of Auditors report has somehow been passed to all the media, yet it has not been possible to pass it to the House of Commons. This issue deserves a protest to be recorded, and I hope that, at the appropriate time, you will make it known, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will certainly look behind the explanation given. Copies are in the Library and hon. Members may see them, but I shall consider the explanation given to me.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 20 JANUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Miss Ann Widdecombe
Mr. Irvine Patnick
Mr. Barry Field

BILLS PRESENTED

Protection of Privacy

Mr. John Browne, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Mr. William Cash, Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Denis Healey, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris and Mr. Frank Cook, presented a Bill to establish a right of privacy against the unauthorised use or disclosure of private information; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed [Bill 14].

Right of Reply

Mr. Tony Worthington, supported by Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. Norman Buchan, Mr. Joseph Ashton, Mr. David Steel, Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris and Mr. Robin Squire, presented a Bill to give members of the public the right of reply to correct inaccuracies which affect them in the press or in broadcasts; to establish a Press Commission; to extend legal aid to actions for defamation; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 February and to be printed [Bill 15].

National Identity Card

Mr. Ralph Howell, supported by Sir William Clark, Sir Eldon Griffiths, Mr. Ted Garrett, Sir Rhodes Boyson, Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Jim Lester, Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Tony Favell, Mr. John Greenway, Mr. Tim Smith and Mr. Allan Stewart, presented a Bill to provide for a national identity card system for all residents of the United Kingdom: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 10 February and to be printed [Bill 16].

Sunday Sports

Mr. Andrew Mackay, supported by Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. David Davis, Mr. George Gardiner, Sir Eldon Griffiths, Mr. Denis Howell, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Sir Charles Morrison, Mr. George Robertson and Mr. Nicholas Soames, presented a Bill to exempt races, athletics sports and other sporting events from the entertainments and amusements to which the Sunday Observance Act 1780 applies and to allow betting to take place on all or some Sunday afternoons on tracks and on a number of Sunday afternoons in licensed betting offices and to make provision as to the rights of established employees concerning Sunday working: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 17 February and to be printed [Bill 17].

Control of Pollution (Amendment)

Ms. Joan Ruddock, supported by Ms. Jean Walley, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Sir George Young, Sir Hugh Rossi, Mr. Robin Squire and Mr. Gerald Bowden, presented a Bill to provide for the registration of carriers of controlled waste and to make further provision with respect to stopping, detaining and retaining vehicles for waste disposal as it relates to the deposit of controlled waste onto unlicensed sites: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 24 February and to be printed [Bill 18].

Citizens' Compensation

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. Charles Irving, Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Jim Lester, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. George Howarth and Mr. Sean Hughes, presented a Bill to establish a Board to make recommendations for the levels of compensation awarded to injured persons; to place a duty on the courts to have regard to such recommendations and to actuarial evidence in awarding compensation; to increase the amount of damages paid in the event of bereavement and to extend the categories of persons entitled to receive such damages: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 March and to be printed [Bill 19].

Abortion (Amendment)

Miss Ann Widdecombe, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Rev. Martin Smyth, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mrs. Marion Roe, Dame Peggy Fenner, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman and Dame Jill Knight, presented a Bill to limit the period within pregnancy during which an abortion may be performed, subject to certain exceptions: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 March and to be printed [Bill 20].

Road Traffic (Breath Tests)

Mr. John Home Robertson, supported by Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. David Knox, Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Sir Philip Goodhart, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Stephen Day, Mr. Barry Sheerman, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones and Mr. Tony Lloyd, presented a Bill to amend the Road Traffic Act 1988 to redefine the powers of the police to administer breath tests; to make further provision for the deterrence and detection of driving under the influence of alcohol; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 24 February and to be printed [Bill 21].

Hearing Aid Council (Amendment)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, supported by Mr. Jack Ashley, Miss Emma Nicholson, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Allen Mckay, Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Andrew Welsh, Mr. Peter Thurnham and Mr. John Hannam, presented a Bill to amend the Hearing Aid Council Act 1968, in order to make further provision for the regulation, conduct and discipline of persons engaged in dispensing haring aids; to amend the composition and procedures of the Hearing Aid Council; and for purposes connected with those matters: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 10 February and to be printed [Bill 32].

INDECENT DISPLAYS (NEWSPAPERS AND WORKPLACES)

Ms. Clare Short, supported by Ms. Jo Richardson, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mrs. Margaret Beckett, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Joyce Quin, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Ms. Marjorie Mowlam and Mrs. Ann Taylor, presented a Bill to remove pornography from the press and the workplace: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 February and to be printed [Bill 30].

DISABLED PERSONS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Rev. Martin Smyth, supported by Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Tom Clark, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. William Ross, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Rev. William McCrea, Mr. Dafydd Wigley and Mr. Ken Maginnis, presented a Bill to make provision equivalent to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 for Northern Ireland: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 17 February and to be printed [Bill 26].

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION

Mr. Andrew Smith, supported by Mr. John Battle, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. David Knox, Mr. Steve Norris, Sir David Price, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Nicholas Winterton and Mrs. Audrey Wise, presented a Bill to provide for certain information concerning fire safety to be available to specified persons; to provide for public inspection of such information; to require local housing authorities to keep a register of certain information; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 24 February and to be printed [Bill 31].

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION)

Mr. Andrew Welsh, supported by Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Charles Irving, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Clive Soley, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Alex Salmond, Mr. Jim Sillars and Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, presented a Bill to provide for access to meetings, reports and documents, subject to certain confidentiality provisions, of housing associations by the tenants of those associations; to give housing associations a duty to publish certain information; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 17 February and to be printed [Bill 33].

ALCOHOL ABUSE (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Jimmy Hood, supported by Sir Hector Monro, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. Calum Macdonald, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. John McAllion, Mr. George Galloway, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Harry Ewing, Mr. Nigel Griffiths, Mr. David Marshall and Mr. Malcolm Bruce, presented a Bill to make it an offence for persons under the age of 18 years to consume alcohol in public places and to impose fines of £1,000 maximum on persons selling, or being agents for the sale of, alcohol to persons under the age of 18 years: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 10 February and to be printed. [Bill 22].

DATA PROTECTION (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Eddie Loyden, supported by Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Robert Parry, Mr. Terry Fields, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Martin Flannery and Mr. Sydney Bidwell, presented a Bill to amend the Data Protection Act 1984 to include data held in any form whatsoever for use by a personal information bureau: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 March and to be printed. [Bill 28].

CONTROL OF SMOKE POLLUTION

Mr. Andrew Hunter, supported by Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Sydney Chapman, Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Conal Gregory, Mr. Humfrey Malins, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. Lewis Stevens and Mr. Timothy Wood, presented a Bill to repeal section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956 and to amend section 1 of the Clean Air Act 1968: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 February and to be printed. [Bill 23].

PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION

Ms. Joyce Quin, supported by Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Simon Hughes, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Mr. Steve Norris, Mr. Andrew Welsh, Mr. Win Griffiths and Mr. Andrew Smith, presented a Bill to give certain bodies duties regarding information concerning public safety; to require the designation of a public safety officer by such bodies; to provide for the keeping of registers of such information; to provide for public access to that information; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 February and to be printed [Bill 29].

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION (PARKING)

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, supported by Mr. Ted Garrett, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. John Battle, Mr. David Curry, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Irvine Patnick, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Keith Bradley, Mr. Christopher Gill and Mr. Archy Kirkwood, presented a Bill to amend the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 in relation to parking: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed. [Bill 24.]

INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ORGANISATIONS (REGISTRATION)

Mr. Michael Marshall, supported by Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Tom Cox and Mr. Neil Thorne, presented a Bill to set up a register of publicly-financed international parliamentary organisations which fund both British and international secretariats and which draw their membership from both Houses of Parliament: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed. [Bill 25].

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, supported by Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. Alastair Goodlad and Mr. David Harris, presented a Bill to amend section 53(3)(c)(ii) and (iii) and section 56(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed. [Bill 27].

Orders of the Day

Official Secrets Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before we start this important debate, I remind the House that a very large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. I do not think that this is a day on which it would be appropriate for me to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches. However, I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind the fact that many right hon. and hon. Members want to take part and that they will tailor their contributions accordingly.

4.4 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

We ask the House today to agree in principle that the criminal law should be prised away from the great bulk of official information. We propose that it should be used to protect unauthorised disclosure of six limited areas and we shall be asking the House to agree on the scope and definition of those areas. Within the areas to be protected we introduce a number of tests of harm which the prosecution will have to prove. We mean that the criminal law should protect, and protect effectively, information whose disclosure is likely to cause serious harm to the public interest, and no other.

This is a coherent and ambitious reform. It is bolder and more open than anything attempted by any Government in this area since the war. Beside it the Labour proposals in the 1978 White Paper look pale, timid and restrictive. The present law is both too wide and too weak. After 16 years of dickering and dispute since the Franks report, I believe the time has come to settle on the successor to section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

We published a White Paper in June this year which set out the Government's proposals. It was debated by the House in July. We promised then to listen carefully to the points made in the debate and to take account of them as we prepared the Bill, and we have done so. Before returning to the general theme, I should like to analyse briefly the changes that have taken place between the White Paper and the Bill.

First, the Bill has introduced a harm test for the disclosure of information received in confidence from a foreign Government or international organisation. In the White Paper this was an absolute offence. I listened carefully to the powerful arguments of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler). I hope that we have met their main concerns. This change has not escaped the obfuscation in which some critics have tried to shroud the Bill. The Bill makes it clear in clause 3(3) that the prosecution may argue that the fact that a confidence has been broken may jeopardise our interests abroad as much as the content of the information which has been disclosed. But, of course, there is no obligation on the jury to accept that argument and it does not allow the harm test to be bypassed. There is no absolute offence here—there is a harm test. The prosecution has to prove that the disclosure jeopardised

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

United Kingdom interests abroad. The fact that a confidence was disclosed would not by itself be enough if our interests had not been put at risk.

It seems to me reasonable that the criminal law should operate against those who deliberately breach the confidence of another country or international organisation when they have good reason to know that this is likely to harm our interests abroad. Those confidences are not entered into capriciously. The test in the Bill relates to our national interests abroad, not to the interests of another country or any international organisation—and the decision is for the jury.

We have looked carefully, too, at the harm test as it will now govern the whole of the foreign affairs field. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks suggested that this test was too vague and too easily met. It is not easy to provide language which draws the line in the right place, but on reflection we thought that there was a way of reflecting the proper concerns of the criminal law without undermining the effective conduct of our foreign policy. We have not introduced in the Bill the White Paper's reference to a disclosure which might prejudice dealings with another Government or international organisation. The test now much more accurately catches its purpose. It is not about maintaining good relations with other countries. Here, too, it is whether a disclosure jeopardises the interests of the United Kingdom abroad.

The White Paper mentioned penalising disclosure of information likely to be useful in the commission of offences. That language has a long pedigree—it goes back to the Franks report, the Labour Government's White Paper, and the Protection of Official Information Bill in 1979. However, it was suggested—for example, by the Guild of British Newspaper Editors—that those words were too vague and too wide. It was never our intention to cover all kinds of information of a general nature that might conceivably be useful in committing an offence, where the chain of circumstance is too long and too uncertain to justify involving the criminal law. The Bill provides a narrower and more precise definition of such disclosure. The prosecution will have to prove that the disclosure resulted in the commission of an offence or was likely to do so.

Fourthly, the Bill makes it clear what information is to be protected in the area of interception. We tie that category specifically and only to the unauthorised disclosure of information about, or arising from, a special investigation. Such an investigation must be undertaken under the authority of a warrant issued by the Secretary of State under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 or, if Parliament agrees to our proposals, under the Security Service Bill.

At one time, the obfuscators whom I mentioned suggested that the press would no longer be able to report a citizen's belief that his telephone was being tapped. The Bill shows that to be nonsense.

Changes have been made between publication of the White Paper and the Bill. In the light of comments and constructive criticisms, we now have a Bill that is tighter in its drafting, narrower in its scope, and more specific in its meaning

I return to the main purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I refer to the right hon. Gentleman's comment about "obfuscators". Is it still the case that clause 3(3) as drafted will make it an offence to publish a leak of any document from another country or international body, regardless of its subject matter?

Mr. Hurd: Regardless of its subject matter, but there is a test of harm. The prosecution must show that the disclosure jeopardised United Kingdom interests abroad. That is the difference between the White Paper and the Bill.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): It is the word "belief" that worries me. The Home Secretary, referring to people whom he does not name but whom he calls "the obfuscators", remarked that it was wrong to say that a citizen having the "belief" that his telephone is being tapped will be prosecuted and convicted if he reveals that belief. However, if an individual is told by a security service officer that his phone is being tapped under the Interception of Communications Act 1985, will he not commit an offence if he discloses that?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, it will be an offence, because we believe in the duty of confidentiality. If a man believes, as often happens on these occasions, rightly or wrongly, that something is amiss, there is no reason why he should not go to a newspaper, and no reason why the newspaper should not publish. That point is the one that the obfuscators have constantly failed to grasp.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I think that I had better get on. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later. I have already given way twice.

Many people fail to grasp our proposals, or attempt to trivialise them. Those people include the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). They suggest—this is the main thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's criticisms—that we are withdrawing from the protection of the criminal law only frivolous and unimportant information. The example given by the right hon. Gentleman was the canteen menu, the colour of the carpets and the brand of tea bags used. In fact, the Bill will remove the protection of the criminal law from the great bulk of sensitive and important information—including policy documents, Cabinet discussions on education, on health and on social security, and economic information and budget preparations. None of them will any longer have the protection of the criminal law. Nor will material within the Bill's protected areas which fails to meet the relevant harm test.

The obfuscators said, "Ah! The Government may do that, but they compensate by legislating to strengthen the civil law on the duty of confidence—the Government will impose through the civil law what they are withdrawing from the criminal law." I do not see that clause. I do not know where it has been smuggled in. In fact, it never existed. We have studied the "Spycatcher" judgment and have considered its implications and the present state of the law most carefully. I can tell the House that we have no plans to introduce legislation to amend the civil law of confidence.

Then the obfuscators said, "You may not do it that way, but you will do it by discipline; you are getting out the thumb screws—the inquisition is being prepared."

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Who are "the obfuscators"?

Mr. Hurd: I am dealing with points made by obfuscators both in the House and outside. I have already named the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and I shall give other examples as I proceed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You, Mr. Speaker, will guide me on this matter, because you know better than I what are the rules of the House. The Home Secretary seems to be making allegations under a cloud of secrecy. As the House is debating the Official Secrets Bill, which the Home Secretary claims will make matters more open, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House who he means by "the obfuscators"?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman was in the middle of explaining that complicated matter.

Mr. Hurd The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) is both literary and literate. Does he really feel that "obfuscators" is an unparliamentary expression? I have given one example and I will give others.

The obfuscators argue that the Government will seek to achieve through tighter discipline the effects that we are renouncing by withdrawing the protection of the criminal law. Even the most chaotic newspaper or any kind of private company seeks to provide for the protection of loyalty and discipline by rules of discipline. Now that the criminal law is to be withdrawn from a great mass of information, the Civil Service code needs to take account of that in its ground rules, but there will be no tightening of disciplinary arrangements and the necessary rewriting will be discussed with the trade unions. All kinds of tricks and traps have been suggested, but the obfuscators have failed to prove the existence of any of them.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I find it difficult to understand what is going on. If by "obfuscators" the right hon. Gentleman means opponents, will he say so? I do not know what he means by "obfuscators".

Mr. Hurd: It is quite clear and the right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what the word means. It is one thing to criticise the merits of the proposals but another to obscure their description. I suggest that both processes have been at work.

It is not safe to remove the protection of the criminal law from all official information. Those who disclose official information without authority may cause such a degree of harm to the country's interests that it is right that they should face criminal proceedings. The criminal law is as necessary to protect the public interest in this area as in any other.

If we are to provide protection in those limited areas, the law must be effective. We need make no apology about that. There can be no credit to Parliament in passing legislation that it knows to be flawed or fudged, and it is against that yardstick that I analyse briefly the arguments of those who wish to overlay the specific definitions and tests in the Bill with blanket defences claiming prior publication and disclosure in the public interest.

The defence of prior publication, if accepted, would mean that anyone who can show that his disclosure had been previously published at any time, or in any form, or anywhere, could in no circumstances commit an offence by his disclosure. That is an offer of immunity from prosecution that the House should not accept. Under our proposals, prior publication can be relevant to a prosecution and, for the first time ever, that fact is recognised by the Bill. With the very narrow exception of special investigations, the jury will always have to consider whether a journalist who publishes information which has already appeared elsewhere in fact caused the specific harm provided in law and had good reason to know that publication would cause that harm. It will be for the prosecution to prove both the harm and the knowledge of harm, and to do so beyond reasonable doubt.

If such cases are ever brought, in many instances they will fail at that point if there had been prior publication. The defence will successfully argue that prior publication means that the disclosure which is the subject of the prosecution has done no further harm—but not always, as there may be circumstances in which the timing and placing of a fresh publication is bound to cause harm which earlier publication had not. A front-page spread in a daily newspaper, for example, on an item previously carried in a technical journal in another country might cause serious further harm. There cannot be any certainty about such matters, and a sensible provision should not suggest that there can. That is why we propose to leave the matter with the jury to decide rather than admitting an overarching defence.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On the last point, is my right hon. Friend ignoring completely the historic judgment of the Hon. Mr. Justice Caulfield in the *Sunday Telegraph* case, in which he said that there is not a limited circle in which it is right to publish and avoid prosecution but a wider circle in which one can publish and be prosecuted—in other words, there is not one standard for publication for a tiny audience and a different standard for a wider headline or enlarged circle?

Mr. Hurd: It is a question of the harm done to the public interest. I should argue, on the ground of common sense, that it is perfectly possible to have partial, incomplete publication in a distant publication with no particular circulation and then to argue that to pick up that information, put it in a different form and splash it across the news, so causing major circulation, would provide a further harm. We cannot assume in advance that it would not and it would be foolish to admit an overarching defence of prior publication. That is why we propose to leave the matter to the jury.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Home Secretary recollect that in the Zircon affair important details were published in a technical journal? One of the subscribers to that technical journal was the relevant technical office in Moscow. Which does the greater harm—the technical journal which gives the details, or a front page imprecise spread? In the name of common sense, let us think about that.

Mr. Hurd: That is the speech which a defence lawyer would make in that case and which might prevail. All I am saying is that it is wrong to have an overarching defence of prior publication regardless of the circumstances.

[Mr. Hurd]

Our decision to sweep away the proposal for a ministerial certificate and to replace it with clear and objective criteria for the jury has also changed the whole context of the debate about the so-called public interest defence. So, indeed, have the proposals in the Security Service Bill.

There are those who have sought to bolster their case for a public interest defence by suggesting that there is, at present, a public interest defence in section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. I have studied the arguments as carefully as possible, but they do not stand up. On the basis of the judgments that have been cited as relevant here, we cannot find one that suggests that there is such a defence in the present law. Many have sought to argue such an interest, but the judgments have never given cause to accept that argument. We are talking about the proposition that there should be a defence, rather than that we should retain an existing defence. We do not believe that a blanket defence of public interest should have a place in the proposals.

It is for Parliament to make clear to the courts what it believes to be in the public interest for the protection of official information. We are asking Parliament to say that it is not in the public interest knowingly to damage the work of the security and intelligence services, knowingly to prejudice the capability of the armed forces, knowingly to jeopardise our country's interests abroad, knowingly to put our citizens' lives at risk, knowingly to add to the crime rate or knowingly to disclose details relating to special investigations under authorised warrants. The House will realise that I have run through the specific harm tests.

The Bill provides that the jury shall consider whether such public interest tests have been met in respect of an individual case. The public interest will be at the heart of the case. The defendant will be able to argue that his disclosure either did not satisfy any relevant harm test or that he had no reason to know that it did. For someone who was not a Crown servant or Government contractor —a journalist, for example—it would be for the prosecution to prove that beyond all reasonable doubt.

Many supporters of a public interest defence have argued that a person may make a disclosure which does good and not harm, or that any harm done may be so modest as not to merit a criminal sanction. The Bill invites Parliament to establish the few areas and the few cases in which a disclosure always causes harm and, in all the other areas, provides a harm test which allows the defendant to make precisely these points. That is what a harm test is all about and that is why we have included it in the Bill. The Bill does not allow someone to say, "Yes, I know my disclosure did the damage set out in the legislation, and what's more I knew that it would, but I divined a different public interest which, in my view, justified my otherwise criminal action".

This is the heart of the real argument. If people think that such arguments should be allowed, that the court should be left to balance some sort of competing interest, that it is all right that lives should be lost, or the national interest endangered, so long as one public servant's perception of maladministration, wrongdoing or misconduct can be aired in the press, we are close to saying that these are not matters which can be regulated by the criminal law. We would be close to saying that it is more properly a matter of dispute between the Government and one of their employees whether a disclosure is in the public interest and that it is a matter that should be settled by a civil court on the balance of probabilities.

I do not think that the House should banish the criminal law from these matters. The House will wish to discuss whether we have identified accurately the matters to be protected by the criminal law and whether we have got the harm test right, but I do not believe that we should accept a general public interest get-out, which has no place in the operation of this law.

Let us consider a practical example. In the area of defence, because of the harm test, the prosecution would have to prove that the disclosure was likely to prejudice the capability of the armed forces and that the defendant knew that that was likely. That might be a hard thing to prove. It would be in order for the defendant to argue, if he could, that so far from prejudicing the capability of the armed forces, his disclosure had enhanced it or had, at least, not prejudiced it. I believe that no responsible person should argue that, while he knew that his disclosure would prejudice the capabilities of the armed services to defend us, it was justified on other grounds—that he believed, for example, that it was in the public interest that the misconduct of a Minister should be exposed or that the Government's defence policy should be reversed. That is the nature of the overarching public interest defence which some people propose.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I wonder whether the Home Secretary can help the House on the test of international relations. Since the Official Secrets Act 1911 was passed, this country has entered into wholly new relationships with other Governments—notably through the Common Market. Eighty per cent. of the legislation that we used to pass is now to be dealt with by the Commission. All negotiations up to the passage of those directives or regulations will be international in character and any Minister going to Brussels to attend the Council of Ministers for matters which may affect meat distribution or matters of great concern will be covered by international relations. Is it not the case that with the growth of an international impact on our national life and by protecting all international contact the Home Secretary has enormously extended the area of secrecy protected by statute into the area of legislation applying to the citizens of this country?

Mr. Hurd: No, because those disclosures are already included. The right hon. Gentleman is making the point that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks made in July. It is partly because we accept that there is some validity in that argument that we have introduced the harm test. The test will be a stiff one on whether the disclosures of information received from abroad or from international organisations in confidence jeopardise the United Kingdom's interests abroad. The point raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has been met in the Bill.

I recognise that there are some Members of the House who find the argument about public interest hardest in the context of our proposals that members of the security and intelligence services, and some who work with them, must continue to be subject to the criminal law if they make any unauthorised disclosure about their work. The very fact

that we argue, as we have consistently argued, that such people cannot talk about their work creates a secret garden which journalists and others naturally want to enter.

It is right that there should be safeguards and controls in this area. That is why we have introduced the Security Service Bill which proposes clearer controls and safeguards. However, I do not believe that further safeguards should be provided by giving members of the services open access to the front pages of the national newspapers.

The Security Service is there to protect the nation as a whole. The services can protect us effectively—for example, against terrorism—only to the extent that their operations stay secret. That is the difficulty with which the House wrestled when discussing and approving the Security Service Bill last week. If members or former members of the services make unauthorised disclosures, they may be putting at risk the lives not only of their colleagues but of all of us. They are aware of that when they volunteer and take on the work initially. Many operations depend on the use of techniques, the details of which are not known and for which there are no other means of averting the threat. Many operations depend also on people who help the services knowing that their help will never be made public. That is why a disclosure by a person claiming to be a member of the services can shake that trust and cause deep damage. I hope that the House will understand the reason behind the special offence that we propose for those people.

In recent years we have moved forward in that area. We now have the independent staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services. He is there to ensure that anxieties of members of the services about their work, if they exist, can be considered at the highest levels. We have introduced the Security Service Bill, to which the House gave a Second Reading last week, which will make clear for the first time in statute the extent of the Security Service's remit and the authority and control for its activities. Those members of the public or organisations who feel aggrieved by the Service's activities will be able, once the Bill is enacted, to take their complaint to an independent tribunal, as they can already take a complaint about the interception of their communications to an independent tribunal.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Would that really be the appropriate venue for an individual to go to with such a complaint if, for example, a serving officer in the security services finds a plot involving potential assassinations or the destabilisation of a Government? Would that really be the appropriate place for an effective remedy in such circumstances?

Mr. Hurd: In such a case an officer would use the staff counsellor. That would enable him to bypass his superiors. That is new since November last year. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take it into account.

The point that I am making is that there are now effective and reasonable ways for members of the security services and others affected to ensure that anxieties are not smothered and that concern about wrongdoing is not overlooked. The aggrieved insider, about whom the hon. Gentleman is concerned, and the aggrieved citizen outside are now both catered for. Those who suggest that members of the services should be free to make unauthorised disclosures about their work to members of the public or *to journalists have failed to recognise that there are now* better avenues for considering such matters. These are all matters of balance and judgment. However, in making that judgment, they are making a judgment that could leave our security dangerously exposed.

I have tried to deal with some of the real anxieties and with some of the obfuscation to which the White Paper and the Bill have given rise. It does sometimes happen —right hon. and hon. Members will have their own examples—that critics of a measure create a caricature in which they genuinely come to believe. I remember that that was the case with the first big Bill that I helped to take through, which became the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. There was a great deal of tumult and many distortions and heated meetings going far beyond anything which Mr. Des Wilson has so far been able to contrive. In the end, the Bill was passed, the tumult subsided, the interest groups turned to something else, and the Act struck the balance that Ministers had described when defending it. I think that it will be so with this Bill also.

The Bill is not, and does not pretend to be, a freedom of information Bill—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] But it comes —perhaps hon. Members will not accept this either—from a Government who have freed more information, especially as regards the security services, than any of their recent predecessors. The Bill lifts from journalists much of the tension inherent in the present law. I do not feel a great deal of sympathy with those to whom I have listened for decades as they lament the tyranny of section 2 but who complain today with equal melancholy now that they are to be relieved of it, especially when they have not studied carefully the nature of the relief.

I should like to take the House back 11 months, to the aftermath of the unhappy debate on the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). I agree entirely that it was an unhappy moment. It was widely supposed that the Government were doing just a little perfunctory work as an excuse for voting against the Bill but that that work would trickle away and come to nothing. Even if we did venture on a proposal, it was supposed, even by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, that in that proposal ministerial certificates would reign supreme. There was no suggestion that we were planning to put the Security Service on a statutory basis or provide a remedy for the aggrieved citizen. It was assumed, by and large—I would say overwhelmingly—that we would stay stuck in the trenches that had been dug deep and manned devotedly by the Labour Government in the days of the right hon. Members for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

However, there is a little bit of a change, is there not? Surely fair-minded hon. Members will accept that there is a little change. We are now exactly in the position which in January I hoped that we would be in by this time. I am proud to be the sponsor and mover of the Security Service Bill and of the Official Secrets Bill. As these clouds of obfuscation—I say that for the last time—roll away, this Bill will be seen for what it is and, indeed, these two measures will be seen for what they are. They are certainly conservative measures in that they have at their heart the effective protection of the citizen from specific and grave dangers. However, they are also radical reforms because they open windows that have remained closed and

[Mr. Hurd]

cobwebbed, because they define clearly what has been confused for a long time, and because they strike in 1988 a balance that is designed for today.

The Bill will greatly reduce the scope of the criminal law. It will provide a modern, fair and effective way of protecting this country's necessary secrets. I commend it to the House.

4.36 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Since the White Paper on this subject was published, and perhaps before—during the debate on the private Member's Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—the Home Secretary has chosen to defend his proposals in an extraordinary way. I do not mean simply the obfuscation that characterised as well as dominated the beginning of his speech; I mean some of the techniques that the right hon. Gentleman has used to defend what he proposes to do. We have seen two examples in his speech today.

One of the bad habits that I hope he will get out of before Committee is defending clauses by adding to them in his speeches words that they do not contain. He asked in his more reasonable manner who would want to complain of the limitation on the publication of information which prejudices the capabilities of the armed forces to defend us? That is not what the Bill says. There is no concept of defence in the clause. Information prejudicing the prospects of the work of the armed forces being carried out successfully are all covered by the Bill, for example, when the armed forces are helping at the Smith lawn polo field, or officiating in some way at the Royal tournament at Earl's Court. The idea that that is a harm test is fatuous and the fact that the Home Secretary wheels in such wholly bogus arguments shows that he doubts his own proposals.

The second bogus argument was the one about the obfuscator, whom the Home Secretary said had been misinforming the public about telephone intercepts. The Home Secretary is quite right. If I go into Whitehall this evening and say that I suspect that my telephone is being tapped, I shall not be prosecuted. It should not be thought terribly generous that the Home Secretary allows me to make such an allegation without being sent to prison. If on the other hand—this is the charge that was made against him, not the one that he invented—I go into Whitehall and say that I know that my telephone is being tapped because I was told so by the man who tapped it, I am automatically guilty of an offence. If the Home Secretary believes that that is an extension of liberty and a liberalising measure, we can understand some of the mistakes that he has made in the Bill.

One mistake and one of the Home Secretary's extraordinary habits when defending his proposals is that he uses the most extravagant language to describe what he proposes. I have no idea why he has chosen to use that language, but I think that we can be certain of one thing —that the terms that the right hon. Gentleman has used have, in almost all particulars, been misleading. He has variously described the Bill as "an essay in openness," as "a substantial and unprecedented thrust in the direction of greater openness",
as "a charter for liberty" and as "an earthquake in Whitehall".

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall certainly give way to the Home Secretary in the hope that we may have another bit of flamboyant nonsense from him.

Mr. Hurd: In the interests of historical accuracy, perhaps I should say that one of the phrases that the right hon. Gentleman used—that about "a charter for liberty" —was used, I think, in a speech made to the Royal Television Society. I said that it was a charter for liberty in comparison with the Labour Government's 1978 proposals.

Mr. Hattersley: I shall withdraw, and say that there are mitigating circumstances because the right hon. Gentleman was making a speech to the Royal Television Society—why that should be mitigation I am not quite sure—and because of the other qualification that the right hon. Gentleman put on the description, but there are still the other three descriptions to which the right hon. Gentleman pleads guilty. All are clearly and absolutely misleading. If that flamboyant language has any meaning at all, it is a description of a Bill which is designed positively to increase the amount of official information that is available to the public. This Bill does not have that purpose and, if it is passed into law, it will not have that effect.

In his calmer moments—we had a few of them today —the Home Secretary has made it clear that he has no wish to introduce or intention of introducing a Bill which would be appropriate to the description that I have just quoted. He said

> "This is not a freedom of information White Paper and we do not propose to introduce a freedom of information Bill." —[*Official Report*, 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 1419.]

He said it again today. Only the Bill which the Home Secretary explicitly rejected would justify the language which he has used to describe the very different Bill which we are debating today. A Bill which justifies the title, "essay in openness" or, "earthquake in Whitehall" would set out positively to promote the free availability of all official information which could be published without damage to the national interest. That Bill would stipulate in positive language the public's right of access to official information. It would enshrine the right to know in law, making that right the presumption on which publication of information depended. It would then, inevitably and necessarily, stipulate categories of information which might, after due process, be taken as exceptions to the general rule of publication and the way in which information which must be kept secret could be kept secret.

This Bill works from the opposite end of the equation. It is concerned solely with secrecy. It does not increase the amount of information available to the public by one iota, and nor does it purport to do so. It must be examined not on the basis of the Home Secretary's extravagant language outside the House, but on the basis of the real principles on which it is constructed. The Bill is not intended to facilitate a free flow of official information—it is intended to provide a new method by which the availability of information can be reduced and obstructed. It is also intended—I think that this accounts, in part at least, for the Home Secretary's strange and inappropriate language

—to help the Home Secretary sound liberal to one audience but appear authoritarian when he finds that convenient.

Without a freedom of information Bill, the cocoon of unnecessary and debilitating secrecy by which Whitehall is surrounded will continue to deny the British people information about the actions of Government which is freely available in other democracies. That is the background against which the Bill must be debated. The best that we can say about it—at least about its purpose—is that it has the object of replacing the discredited and absurd section 2 of the present Act with something more reasonable and less risible. Even then, it fails to make the improvements that are possible within the limited terms of that aspiration. Section 2 of the present Act is so indefensible that it seems almost impossible that the Government could not find something substantially better to put in its place. In some particulars, however, the effects of this Bill will be substantially worse, not least because section 2, being so discredited, has lost much of its force. It is being replaced by a Bill which will more easily give effect to the Government's authoritarian instincts.

In his description of the Bill today, the Home Secretary made much of two points: first, official information—which will no longer be covered by official secrets legislation—and, secondly, the employment of the courts to make judgments about what is and is not publishable within the terms of the new prohibition. In both cases, the right hon. Gentleman exaggerated the changes proposed by the Bill to such an extent that we can assume only that the exaggerations were intentional.

Some material covered by the Official Secrets Act 1911 will not be included in the Bill and, therefore, will not be covered. That is hardly surprising as the present Act covers every item of information, no matter how trivial, unimportant or small it is. Saying that everything is no longer covered is not the same as doing what the Home Secretary implies he is doing, which is encouraging the publication of information which it is not necessary to keep secret. Democracy requires the publication of more information, and the Home Secretary is not making even a gesture in the direction of that principle. Nor is it right to say that the final arbiter of what can and cannot be published will no longer be the Government alone.

In some categories of information, the courts will be required to make judgments about intention and damage, but, as I hope to show, the Government will still possess arbitrary powers over far too large an area of official information, and even when the courts are required to judge the effect of disclosure, the nature of the judgments that they are required by the Bill to make will make conviction certain when conviction is not reasonable.

If the Bill becomes law, the Government will still possess far too much power over the crucial decision about what should and should not be secret. In too many clauses, the Bill makes the Government, and the Government alone, the arbiter of the national interest. It is inevitable that, when the Government possess powers that enable them to describe and determine where the national interest lies, they do not distinguish between the true national interest and the sectional interests that they represent. That is why Clive Ponting was prosecuted for telling the truth. His real crime was correcting the deception that had been perpetrated by the Government.

It goes without saying that there is agreement on both sides of the House that official information which, were it to become public, would damage the security of the state must remain secret. I believe that there is also agreement that that principle requires sanctions to deter publication of material which would benefit enemies and potential enemies. It also requires penalties to be imposed upon those who are guilty of doing the damage which publication brings about, but I believe that there are three essential questions which divide us. I was about to say "divide the House" but I think that, as the Committee stage goes on, it will become clear that the divisions are not on the traditional and hackneyed lines that we have come to expect in this place.

I believe that the three questions are these: how are we to define the categories of information which, were they made public, would so damage the state that their publication must be an offence, who should be the arbiter of whether information comes into that category, and what procedures shall be followed to prosecute and convict those who are suspected of publishing information which it is necessary to keep secret?

For many of us, the essential requirement that links each of the answers to those questions is that there should be a test of damage to the national interest which is not applied by the Government alone. If we examine the Bill in detail, we see how comprehensively the Government fail to meet that need.

First, there are those categories in which the Government alone are the arbiter of what may be published. Clause 1 is comprehensive and arbitrary. Disclosure about their work by members of the security and intelligence services, and similar disclosures by those designated as being associated with those services, is an automatic offence. In this area, there is no need to demonstrate damage to the national interest. The fact of disclosure is the evidence on which conviction is made certain, no matter how trivial or inconsequential the information received may be. It cannot be necessary or right to make every item connected with security, no matter how loosely, subject to automatic restriction. It is intolerable that the Government alone should be able to define and designate the individuals who are covered by the blanket ban, and the categories of work which are to be shrouded in secrecy.

There was much justifiable complaint at the idea that the Government should certificate individual items of information as being damaging breaches of a secrets Act. Clause 1 allows the Government to designate activities, categories of individuals and swathes of information that oblige people to observe complete secrecy about what they do and what they have discovered from their jobs, even if that discovery involves fraud or felony. In those cases, the court makes no judgment about harm—revelation in itself is an offence.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): How does the right hon. Gentleman reconcile what he is saying now with the fact that the 1978 Labour proposals contained no defence of public interest or prior publication? However, they referred to an intention to introduce a system of binding ministerial certificates.

Mr. Hattersley: I can easily explain that. We have an improved system. The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) must not despair of political parties improving. If he has any doubts about that, the Home Secretary exists to prove my point. He is the last Minister to say that

[Mr. Hattersley]

politicians have to remain immobilised in the position they adopted 10 years ago. Ten years ago the Home Secretary was the apotheosis of Heathism. He was the Heath man to end all Heath men. He was the great follower of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), and worked and spoke for him throughout the country. I doubt that he often says in Cabinet today the complimentary things that he said about his right hon. Friend 10 years ago. We can all change and improve. I do not propose for one minute to pretend that we should not have gone further on official secrets 10 years ago. Of course we should have done so. Some of us thought so at the time—I shall not mention any names but we certainly existed—and I propose to continue arguing that we should go further than the Bill provides.

Government spokesmen have gone out of their way to suggest that the power to prosecute and convict without demonstrating harm to the national interest is limited in the Bill to public servants. That is certainly not the case. Under clause 4(3)(a) it is an offence—which does not require the proof of damage—to publish information related to a warrant under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 or under the Security Service Bill. If my telephone is tapped in mistake for my neighbour's, I would commit an offence by making public that fact and any newspaper that published the story would also have broken the criminal law.

If the Security Service broke into my house in mistake for my neighbour's house and injured my family or damaged my property, it would be a criminal offence to reveal that. It is only necessary to describe the provisions relating the the Interception of Communications Act and the Security Service Bill to realise that they are wholly unacceptable. The Security Service and its activities, as designated by the Minister and as covered by this legislation and the Security Service Bill, are shrouded in complete secrecy. That is unhealthy for the public and for the service itself.

In the recent past, particularly since the publication of the Bill, the Government have gone out of their way to suggest that they have relaxed some of its provisions, especially as they affect journalists as distinct from public servants. An examination of the liberalisation claim shows how slight it is and how careful the Government have been to obtain powers to enable them to take action against journalists if and when they choose to do so.

We have been blandly told, time after time—the Home Secretary did it again today—that on almost every occasion the prosecution of a journalist as distinct from the prosecution of an intelligence officer would succeed only if there was proof that harm had been done. That is not true. An editor who publishes the diaries or biography of a retired intelligence officer could be prosecuted as an accessory to the offence committed by the officer. The offence is not limited by the need to demonstrate harm. An editor who discussed publication with the author of intelligence service memoirs would be guilty of collusion, even before they were published. Does anyone doubt that the Government, who so obsessively pursued Peter Wright at the taxpayers' expense and who attempted to gag *The Guardian* and the *Sunday Times*, would not choose to proceed against an editor under the accessory provisions and prevent him from arguing that no harm had been done by his actions? There are other areas where, although in theory the test of harm is necessary, in practice convictions will almost always be automatic.

The obvious example is information supplied in confidence by other Governments. Such information is protected by two subsections. Clause 3(2) specifies comparatively objective tests against which the damage caused by disclosure must be measured. The most definite and—I concede at once—the most justifiable is the test that disclosure would endanger the safety of British citizens abroad. But clause 3(3) allows for conviction if disclosure is likely to have any of the effects stipulated in the previous clause. The word "likely" injects a terrifyingly objective analysis into the entire legal process.

Worse is to follow. Clause 3(3) allows conviction on the basis that damage might have been caused simply by the disclosure of the information, whether or not the information itself was damaging. It will be possible to argue that the publication of a confidential story so unnerves our allies that it is a breach of the Bill. It will unnerve our allies because any breach makes them uncertain about the competence of our security services.

As I said to the House last week, that was the case made to me by the Foreign Secretary about Zircon. When I suggested that the Soviet Union probably knew as much about Zircon as did the editor of the *New Statesman*, he said that the revelation of the facts was not as damaging as the discovery by our allies abroad that we allowed such facts to be revealed. If that is the criterion on which the Government operate, this clause does not require actual harm of any sort. It simply requires the Government to say that, in their judgment, harm was likely. Does the Home Secretary believe that the defence "has not done harm", when the Government are saying that the very fact of publication will cause harm, would succeed? If he believes that, he will believe anything. I am sure that he does not hold that view.

In some categories, a demonstration of harm is necessary, but even there the harm is defined in such a way as to diminish the protection that the qualification is claimed to provide. The Home Office press release—another example of the Home Secretary's recently acquired and deplorable technique—promised that the Bill would require juries to make

"specific tests of harm to the public interest".

That is simply not true. Unfortunately, neither the concept of public interest nor the words "public interest" appear anywhere in the Bill.

Different tests of justification are applied to different categories of information. Information about crime must not be revealed if the revelation results in the commission of an offence, or is likely to do so. Information relating to the offence must not be revealed if revelation prejudices the capabilities of the armed forces, in part or in whole, or is likely to do so. The words "likely to do so" add an area of unacceptable subjectivity to the process. More importantly, each of the tests against which the damage is judged is much less specific and, in terms of making a real assessment of the national interest, far weaker than should be tolerated by the House.

In its submission to the Government on the criterion "jeopardises the interests of the United Kingdom abroad", the BBC observed wryly that "jeopardy" is not a "useful guide to journalists or juries.".

I am sure that that is true, but the concept of jeopardy is a useful catch-all for Governments interested more in conviction than in objective analysis of possible harm.

In 1972, the Franks committee proposed a much more rigorous definition of the harm test: that disclosure would result in

"serious injury to the interests of the nation."

Mr. Hurd: And ministerial certificates.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Home Secretary wishes to tell me now why those two things must go together and why we cannot reject one and accept the other, I shall give way to him immediately.

Mr. Hurd: Under the Franks arrangements, the Minister will decide in his certificate whether the test has been met. For the past five minutes the right hon. Gentleman has neglected the existence of the jury members, who are crucial people in the process.

Mr. Hattersley: On the contrary, for the past five minutes I have been drawing the attention of the House to something that the Home Secretary neglected to mention —the criteria on which a jury is asked to make a judgment. I contend that the criteria are inadequate and damaging. I asked why the Franks criteria could not be used instead of the fatuous—or perhaps I should say vacuous—criteria laid down by the Home Secretary. He might think that he has explained why he rejected the more rigorous, tight and precise concept of serious injury to the interest of the nation, but I assure him that the faces behind him do not suggest that his hon. Friends are convinced by what he purported to call an answer.

The Franks definition is that which successive Governments have regarded as suitable for classification of information as secret. The Franks report recommended that information classified below that level, and therefore not appropriate for that test, should not be covered by official secrets legislation or criminal sanction. We support that wise judgment. Under the Bill, anything remotely related to security, no matter how trivial, will be covered. "Confidential"—which anyone who has been in Government knows means nothing at all—"Restricted" —which anyone who has been in Government knows means very little—"Secret" and "Top Secret" are all lumped together. In the categories where a test of harm applies, the definition of "harm" is so wide and so weak that it is difficult to imagine any revelation, which is followed by a prosecution, not resulting in conviction. Eight years ago the Bill that the Government abandoned included a far better test of harm—the notion of serious injury. We have heard no justification for going back on that more rigorous definition; the only possible explanation is the Government's desire to construct a Bill that will convict more easily than was thought necessary in 1979.

The Bill is and will remain authoritarian until a public interest defence is included within its provisions. During the White Paper debate I suggested that the Bill, far from being a liberalising measure, would have secured the conviction of, for example, Mr. Clive Ponting, who was acquitted on what amounted to a public interest defence. I vividly remember the cheers with which that contention was greeted by Conservative Members.

The Home Secretary has done much to confuse both the House and the country about the application of a public interest criterion, sometimes arguing that such a defence is possible under the Bill by equating it with the harm test—that is quite wrong—and sometimes insisting that acquittal on such a defence would be perverse, even under the present Act. Indeed, he made that point today. I shall remind the right hon. Gentleman of what happened in the Clive Ponting case. The jury concluded that it was in the public interest that the truth should be told. Although, under the Bill, that jury might still decide that the balance of interest supported publication, the terms of the Bill would make it impossible for Mr. Ponting to be acquitted in the way that he was acquitted four years ago. There is no doubt that what Mr. Ponting revealed would, in the words of the Bill,

"prejudice the capability of . . . the armed forces of the Crown to carry out their tasks."

That having been demonstrated, nothing else would matter. Mr. Ponting would be found guilty.

Mr. Dalyell: According to Mr. Ponting today—and I understand from legal authorities that this is likely—Mr. Bruce Laughlan could not have called for testimony from my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), nor from the Master of Caius, the Rouse-Ball Professor of Law, Professor Wade.

Mr. Hattersley: I propose to develop exactly that point, but without those examples, in a moment. Before doing so, I wish to ask a general question. Is impairing the work of the armed forces really a proper criterion by which a criminal offence is to be measured—a criminal offence that is an automatic offence convictable in all circumstances? No other western democracy would make it so. If that were, in itself, enough to convict, we would be arguing, like some South American dictatorship, that the work of the armed forces was an object in itself that must be protected from all outside interests in all circumstances. We believe that when such matters are judged, we should decide whether, on balance, the outcome was good or bad for the public interest.

In the Ponting case it was decided that impairing in one particular the work of the armed forces was in the public interest. Any official secrets legislation that does not include at least that possibility is intolerable. Let us consider the possibilities. Public servants who discover a crime or a misdemeanour within their service, and find the internal method of complaint and appeal provides no redress, will be prevented from exposing that wrongdoing. That public servant will be sure that, whether or not the perpetrator of the wrongdoing is prosecuted and convicted, exposing the crime or the misdemeanour will, of itself, lead to certain prosecution and inevitable conviction.

Under the present law—absurd and inadequate though it is—a public interest defence is possible. A defendant can argue in litigation that he or she made the classified information available only to those—and I quote from the Act—

"to whom it is, in the interest of the state, his duty to communicate it."

That becomes a public interest defence, as it was in the case of Clive Ponting. He argued that, numbered among the people for whom it was in the interests of the state for him to communicate previously suppressed facts about the Ministry of Defence, were the people of Great Britain. The jury representing the people of Great Britain agreed with him.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): On the question of a public interest defence, the right hon. Gentleman will recall that the Cabinet of which he was a member authorised the production of the Cheveline as the upgrading for the Polaris nuclear weapon. That information was kept from other members of the Cabinet, from hon. Members and from the public. Had some of those civil servants—who must have been aware of that—leaked that information in the public interest, would the right hon. Gentleman have approved of their action?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course I would not have approved, and I believe that a jury would have convicted them of behaving in a manner against the national interest. However, if the hon. Gentleman wants to know whether I would be prepared to allow that to be tested, the answer is that, of course, I would. The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the entire case of those who believe in openness. We are prepared to test our judgment against the judgment of an English court. What divides the authoritarians and the libertarians is the view, which the hon. Gentleman clearly holds, that if the Government say it, it must be right and it must be true. I do not accept that principle. If it is any consolation to the hon. Gentleman, I do not believe in it any more for a Labour Government than I do for a Conservative Government. We need to be protected against Governments of all sorts and of all persuasions.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who asked why a public interest defence was not included in the Labour Government's proposals in 1978, the right hon. Gentleman said that his Government had changed their mind. I hope that he will forgive us for wondering why it is such a fundamental principle of liberty now when it was not such 10 years ago.

Mr. Hattersley: It is important to consider the Bill and the alternative proposals on their merits. I shall argue for the merits of the sort of freedom of information legislation that I want. I believe that to be right now as I believed it to be right in 1978. I do not want to be over sententious, but I hope that when we try—as I hope that we will—to discuss the merits of the alternative systems, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the argument about motivation 10 years ago is pretty small beer and trivial.

I shall put the point about a public interest defence in a way that will explain and justify it to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney). Let us assume that a Labour Government are in power and that they tap the telephones and break into the houses of hon. Members who have close but wholly legal connections with South Africa. Let us further assume that an intelligence officer reports that abuse to *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. He has explained that he made a complaint within the official machinery, but the abuse continued. When that unlawful interception and burglary are reported, would the hon. Gentleman really want the intelligence officer who exposed the scandal and the newspapers that reported it to be automatically and inevitably convicted of a criminal offence? Or would they wish, as I wish, that those who expose wrongdoing to be given the right to argue the defence that they did what they did in the public interest? Under this Bill, such a defence would be impossible, for part of the intention of the Bill is to withhold information not from the enemies of society but from the members of society. If I had doubted it for a moment, one of the more extraordinary points that were made by the Home Secretary almost an hour ago would have convinced me of that conviction.

The Home Secretary told us that damage may be done if a previously secret story were published on the front page of a newspaper, even though the secrecy had previously been breached on the inside pages of a technical journal. That contention can be justified in two ways. The first is that intelligence agents of foreign powers do not read technical journals. The second is that we wish to keep information not from foreign powers but from the British public. It is that which is most offensive about the Bill.

Mr. Hurd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hattersley: Although the Home Secretary shakes his head now, there is no possible explanation of the extraordinary point that he made in the exact terms that I described.

Let us pursue the matter a little further and examine clause 6(3). No offence is committed if confidential information in this country is published when that information has already been published lawfully in another country. Why is it an offence to repeat information that has been published unlawfully in another country? I make the same point. It is reasonable to conclude that Russian agents examine the *Washington Post*, *Le Monde* and *La Stampa*. They will not confine their interest simply to matters that have been published with the authority of the American, French and Italian Governments. If a secret is published in an allied country, it is not unreasonable to assume that it is known in Moscow and Peking. Prohibiting its republication in London can have only one intention—that it should be kept not from the enemies of Great Britain but from the people of Great Britain.

The history of official secrets legislation, as manipulated by the Government, is concerned with the convenience of Government as much as it is concerned with the security of the realm. The Wright fiasco was prolonged and pursued to avoid the Government in general and the Prime Minister in particular losing face. Clive Ponting was prosecuted because he told the truth and, in consequence, exposed official lies. This Bill, if it is passed into law, will confirm the Government's power to perpetrate all those excesses.

It is a bad Bill. Its application is likely to be worse because, during its early years, the Government will manage and manipulate it. We shall vote against it tonight.

5.12 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on having carried out his undertaking to bring the White Paper to the House before the end of the last Session and on bringing the Bill before the House at the beginning of the present Session. He faced a formidable task; nobody recognises that better than I do. The Government over which I presided set up the Franks committee, and, in 1973, we accepted all its recommendations. My right hon. Friend's predecessor, Mr. Robert Carr—now Lord Carr—made that statement in the House. We were not in power long enough to implement the committee's recommendations in the next Session. The Franks committee urged that the House should pass an official information Act. It shows the difference of approach that the emphasis was on

an "official information" Act. That is one of the causes of anxiety among many hon. Members and the press about the real attitude behind the Bill.

My right hon. Friend has considered many of the points that were raised. This debate can only be an introduction to consideration in Committee. I appreciate that. Mr. Speaker has asked hon. Members to make brief contributions. I should like to make a brief contribution, but many points in the Bill need to be discussed in detail. Therefore, my right hon. Friend and the Whip will urge the Leader of the House to allow proper time for discussion in Committee.

One cannot rush the passage of a Bill of this kind. The implications are far too great. There is the implication for the safety of the realm. That is of great importance, but of equal importance is the right of the individual citizen, and certainly of the House, to the utmost information available, compatible with the safety of the realm. That requires striking a balance, but, in my experience over many years, all too often Governments are likely to put the balance on the side of Government keeping information secret rather than giving information to the citizen and the House of Commons.

I can recall, in my time in politics, at least three major foreign policy matters, for example, when information should most certainly have been made available to the House of Commons and to the public, but it was not. I have no desire to see those instances repeated. I also have in mind the case of Sir Con O'Neill, who resigned over Suez, and did so quietly. He just wished to leave the Civil Service. He should not have left it at that. I quite agreed with the Chief Whip at the time—I said nothing. As a senior civil servant who knew the whole story, he had a responsibility to give the real and full reasons why he resigned. Under this Bill, he could not do so. There are several similar instances at major points in our history when it became necessary for a civil servant to do that. It is now said that he can go through the channels of the Civil Service.

Again, in my experience, the attitudes of heads of the Civil Service vary. Sir William Armstrong was strongly in favour of an open Civil Service and always gave permission for civil servants to appear on the BBC or ITN to give their views. Other heads of the Civil Service have not taken that view. If the head of the Civil Service says, "You have your complaint, you have expressed it to me, but that is the end of the matter," should it be the end of the matter? It is a matter of ethics and professional service, which must be taken into account in a Bill of this kind.

The Official Secrets Act 1911 has been open to a great deal of criticism. However, it has continued because, on the whole, it has been dormant. It has been used by Governments only in cases of obvious espionage. For sound reasons, cases were often heard in private. Nobody doubted that the court had dealt with a case of deliberate, organised espionage. The Ponting case was dismissed. In another case, the girl, not the Government who brought the case, got the sympathy of the public. That is why the Official Secrets Act has continued in its present form. It was used only in the most extreme cases.

The question is whether the Bill will continue in that tradition. The cause of anxiety is the belief that it will not. I ask my right hon. Friend not to get upset about it. Any Government who pursue the Wright case to the ultimate ends of the world, as this Government did, are bound to face suspicion about the degree to which they will use the great powers that they have in the Bill. The Wright case was pursued to the ultimate. My right hon. Friend must accept that, if the Government were successful in the Wright case here, the British people would not have had the right to read the book, whereas the rest of the world would have. Surely that is not tolerable.

After a press conference in Hong Kong, I was presented by the press with a paperback copy of Mr. Wright's book. I expressed only limited gratitude to them, because, when I opened it, I saw that it was in Chinese. That did not make Mr. Wright's allegations available to me, but it made them available to 1·05 billion Chinese readers. We cannot continue that sort of thing with this Bill. That is what gives cause for such anxiety.

That brings me to prior publication. My right hon. Friend spoke of technical journals. Technical journals in the United States produce a mass of information about the American forces, the like of which is never seen in this country, never published and never revealed by Ministers. It is for the super-powers that it is made available. The United States, too, has its Freedom of Information Act. This legislation will close the doors on anything of that kind. It is not justifiable that, if information appears in an American technical journal, the British are the only people not to be allowed to know about it. The Russians, Chinese and Americans can know. All our allies know. The only people who cannot know are the British people. That cannot be allowed to continue. That is why I emphasise to my right hon. Friend the need for time in Committee to discuss this in detail, and to give him the chance to examine some criticisms.

Our objective should be to produce a Bill acceptable to both sides of the House and, as far as possible, to the press. The latter will be more difficult. When we discussed the Franks report I invited all the editors of the British papers to come to No. 10 and give me their views about it. They had only one view: ignore it, and sweep away the Official Secrets Act. That is not possible. The degree of support from the British press will always by limited, but what is said in the House should be taken into account.

I cannot see any way of dealing with these problems other than by having a public interest. I recognise my right hon. Friend's emphasis on the jury, but if public interest is to be taken into account, fewer cases are likely to be brought under the Act. Why should one open the whole arena to cases being brought when one expects that juries will dismiss them?

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is difficult for any judge to prevent a jury hearing arguments which will amount to a public interest argument? [HON. MEMBERS: "Quite right."] My hon. Friends properly say, "Quite right." But when a case is being argued before a jury, it is necessarily argued much more widely than before a judge sitting alone.

Mr. Heath: The terms of the legislation must be taken into account. If it is clear in the Bill that public interest must be taken into account, it clarifies the whole position, as it should do.

There are many confusions in the Bill and I resist the temptation to call my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for obfuscation. He has hidden some parts, and when we reach Committee stage these must be produced. For example, what happens if, as may happen under a future

[Mr. Heath]

Government, our defence forces are in a particular way inadequate? If such public knowledge is produced, one may say that it is damaging to the country. This takes us back to the famous Duncan Sandys case before the second world war. He was absolutely right and was finally shown to be right. If we rely on the terms of the Bill, that would not happen. It would be said that, by revealing our weakness, he has done immense harm to the good of the country. That would hold good under this Bill.

Again, if there are better reasons than I have found for this, we can discuss them in Committee. That emphasises the need for a thorough discussion in Committee.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it not also true that Major Sir Desmond Morton, who advised Churchill and told him about air weaknesses, would certainly be in prison under this Bill?

Mr. Heath: There may be other cases and it is open to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to explain them all later.

We can argue about the past, what we were about to do in 1972 and what a Labour Government did or did not do in 1978. In the past 20 years we have seen a complete transformation of information in the world. It is due entirely to technology, satellites and everything which goes with them. Whatever happens at any moment we hear a second later on the radio and see on the first news broadcast on television. That has transformed the whole approach to public information, which includes the secrecy of essential services. It means that the public not only expect more information, but are led to expect it by the media and are entitled to it. It may be said that I have changed since 1972-73. Yes, I recognise that what goes on in the world is of prime importance to citizens and Parliaments. That is being recognised elsewhere, but we have been slow to recognise it.

If the Bill is passed, will Irangate be possible? The answer is no. For 30 years, nothing would come out. Yet Irangate exposed the incompetence and hypocrisy of the President of the United States. Real damage was done to the United States because the matter was seen worldwide. I shall not attempt to describe the actions of his subordinates, but they were all publicly discussed because the basic information was made available in the first instance which led to the Congressional hearing in which everything was brought out. That is a test of this Bill. Could such an example happen in this country under the Bill? I do not believe that it could.

Mr. Buchan: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that America was a great deal healthier as a result?

Mr. Heath: I agree with that. I know that opinions vary. I know from an answer that she gave at Question Time that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister thinks that it was not right that everything should have come out. There is a difference of view; I accept that. There is not a difference of view in the United States, which expects information to be made available for people to make their judgments, although other powers may draw their deductions from what was revealed. When we have a Bill in which that is possible—we have information and can form our judgments about it—it will be a satisfactory Bill for information. The other side of the coin is that we must ensure that vital questions of security can be protected, as they are under the Official Secrets Act.

I thank my right hon. Friend for introducing the Bill. In the past, he has listened to criticisms. I hope that he will pay attention to what is said in this House and outside, and that in Committee we can have longer, more detailed discussions of important matters which remain.

5.27 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) must have given the Home Secretary the clue to why the dancing in the streets at the introduction of this Bill was somewhat restrained. We are discussing the circumstances in which we prosecute people for revealing information. Any question of an obligation on the Government to make information available is not even part of the debate, because it is not part of the Home Secretary's proposals.

In my usual conciliatory way I should like at least to start by advancing some propositions which may meet with the approval of the whole House. Since it is Christmas, I suggest a party game. Who said:

> "Publicity is the . . . most effective check against any arbitrary action."?—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1351.]

Was it John Milton, Duncan Campbell, Esther Rantzen, Clive Ponting or Peter Wright? The answer is that it was not any of them. It was said originally by Franks, but it was quoted with approval by an honourable Member of this House on 5 February 1972 when introducing a private Member's Bill. She was then simply the hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

Mr. Buchan: I think I would have guessed the right answer.

Mr. Archer: I think that some of my hon. Friends might have guessed. Admittedly, that hon. Lady was dealing with local councils and she was no more enamoured of them then than now, but I suspect that she might have said the same about the state, because at that time, like Louis XIV, she had not become the state.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman said 1972, but I think he means 1960.

Mr. Archer: I meant 1960. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for correcting me. The lady in question was then the hon. Member for Finchley, not the right hon. Lady.

I never expected to hear myself say, "I agree with the right hon. Lady." Honesty compels me to declare, however, that in this instance I do agree with her, even though she no longer agrees with herself.

Perhaps there are propositions that will gain general acceptance in the House. For example, information is the key to high standards in public administration; there is no more effective inducement to high standards than the knowledge that achievements and failures will become known; information is the key to representative democracy; there can be a choice only for those who know what the options are; the electorate can pass judgments on Governments only if it knows what Governments are doing. I would think that those propositions would be met with general agreement.

Equally, I think that there is general agreement that there must be some restrictions on the right of the public

to have information. For example, there are the interests of security, crime prevention and other matters that are set out in the Bill, as well as subjects which do not relate to the Bill. There is the right of individuals to a deserved reputation. There are matters of copyright and of obscenity. The European convention on human rights lists some of the instances where restrictions are necesary in the interests of a democratic society. I fear, however, that those are not the only considerations that induce administrations to attempt to conceal information.

We cannot gauge the state of public information in the United Kingdom by reading section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 or even the statute book as a whole. One would expect the Prime Minister's assertion to gain general acceptance in a country where, until this century, those who were persecuted in their own countries came to settle and to find refuge, because it was within the United Kingdom that they were free to say and to write what they chose. Yet to discover the hygiene conditions within meat factories, it was necessary for the investigator to go to the United States, to which the factories exported, to invoke the Freedom of Information Act in that country and to read the reports which inspectors in the United States had prepared on the British meat factories. This is a country where only a series of private Members' Bills over the past two or three years have brought us to a position which is somewhere near that which prevails in other countries, not one that is in advance of them.

As I have said, we cannot gauge the state of information in this country by reading the only legislation in the statute book. Perhaps we suffer from the fact that British bureaucracy is one of the oldest and most established bureaucracies in the world. Its culture is one of the most deeply entrenched, with all the advantages and disadvantages which that entails. One of the disadvantages is the collegiate sense of identity and of superiority which comes from sharing secrets. It is the binding mechanism of a priesthood or of a freemasonry. It is the source of that sense of loyalty to the machine which extends beyond loyalty to the community, which has elevated the ability to keep secrets to the greatest of all virtues.

The evidence given to the Franks committee included a quotation from a permanent secretary to the Treasury of 1873, which read:

> "The unauthorised use of official information is the worst fault that a civil servant can commit. It is on the same footing as cowardice by a soldier."

It is against that background that we debate the Bill. Section 2 of the 1911 Act has stood for years as a symbol of excessive, all-embracing secrecy for the sake of secrecy. It sprang from the paranoia of 1911, and it has subsequently been protected by the mentality that is portrayed so perceptively in "Yes, Prime Minister".

Opposition Members should welcome the final dispatch of section 2. We should commend the Government for taking such action. We have few enough opportunities to commend the Government, and we must not be ungenerous when they occur. But if we are to disturb the sleeping dog to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred —the sleeping dog that does not wake very often, and only in a restricted way—we are surely entitled to examine what the Home Secretary proposes to put in its place. If the Bill, when enacted, remains on the statute book for as long as its predecessor, it had better be an improvement. The Home Secretary must not be surprised that the Bill has been hailed as a substitute for a freedom of information Act.

It is in the interests of time that I shall concern myself only with the absence from the Bill of a public interest defence, on the lines of that included in the Bill presented by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). The Home Secretary does not provide a substitute for that defence when he introduces the damaging disclosure test. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said—this was taken up by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—the prosecution is entitled to succeed on the damaging disclosure test if it can show any damage that follows from the disclosure. The public interest test introduces a balancing of the advantages and disadvantages that flow from the disclosure.

I am bound to ask what our reaction should be when a normally loyal and discreet official says that the arguments of security and confidentiality are being used, or abused, to conceal something that should be challenged, something about which the public should know and something on which they are entitled to pass judgment. What is the position if the official says, "My conscience tells me that I can no longer be party to the deception"? If any Conservative Member tells us that he can envisage no circumstances in which he would feel that dilemma, he would be more at home in some Orwellian nightmare than in a free society.

How far should a political community recognise the dilemma? I do not seek to argue that we can afford absolute licence for the individual conscience. I accept that, if any of us were permitted to do whatever our consciences dictated, it would be impossible for us all to remain on one planet. That is not what we are being asked to consider. I imagine that it will be said that decisions of the sort that I have postulated should cost something. As Nye Bevan once said, one cannot be a martyr without being prepared to wear a martyr's crown.

But understanding and tolerance are political virtues. A healthy political community should be able to accommodate a genuine dilemma in which even a decent and loyal individual—indeed, especially a decent and loyal individual—may find himself. I make a suggestion, in the hope that as a result we may find some common ground. I have no authority to speak on behalf of any of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and I do not know whether they will agree with me—I make it clear that I am not trying to draft a provision—but could we not say that a jury should be empowered to acquit if it found the following three factors: first, that the accused was motivated by a genuine conscientious conviction; secondly, that he tried so far as possible to rectify the position within the system; thirdly, that on balance the public interest was better served by disclosure than by silent acquiesence?

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us in what other area of criminal law motive is a defence?

Mr. Archer: I could list at least 20 offences where motive is a defence. Motive is one of the matters frequently considered by the courts in the context of intention. Juries have no difficulty in considering it. The philosophy underlying our criminal law is that there should be no guilt

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without a guilty mind. I am prepared to argue about this in Committee with the hon. Gentleman. It is not a novel concept.

I should have thought the hon. Gentleman would go along with me in erecting two hurdles—one subjective and the other objective. I can well imagine that some of my friends in the NCCL might not thank me for doing that. They might say that it places the individual conscience in mercy to popular opinion. I have no doubt that some Conservative Members will say it is the thin edge of an anarchist wedge, but I should have thought that the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) and the Minister would have agreed that this was an attempt to find some middle ground.

It may be said that such a matter should not be left to a jury; as I understood it, the Secretary of State said something like that. That surprises me, because every day of the week juries decide on concepts that are broadly of this type. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup pointed out, juries have been deciding matters similar to this in the context of section 2. On the whole, juries have a better record of recognising the occasional conflict between liberty and order than politicians.

This is not the only problem raised by the Bill, but time, as always in this Chamber, imposes its own restrictions on free speech——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that one major problem with the public interest defence is that a defendant can agree that he has caused positive harm to the national interest, but claim that he has done so in the public interest? He may argue that the harm he has done should be considered in the light of the good that he has achieved. However, if positive harm is done to the public interest, the public interest is not being served.

Mr. Archer: The difference between the two tests is that, with the public interest test, it is possible to balance whether, on the whole, the public has benefited from a disclosure. The positive harm test does not permit a jury to take that into account——

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton) *rose*——

Mr. Archer: I am sure the hon. and learned Gentleman will make his own speech later.

We all know of cases in which juries have been directed that they cannot take such a judgment into account. Occasionally, they break loose and do not follow the judge's direction, but it is unsatisfactory for a jury to have to disregard a judge's direction in order to effect justice——

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Archer: I am sure the hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me; I have spoken for long enough.

I urge the Minister to reflect that, if secrecy is sometimes necessary to protect our way of life, it is the cure that may well be worse than the disease—it may provide a greater threat to the way of life it is intended to protect.

5.43 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) underestimates the difficulty in his proposition about the public interest defence. Even by his second criterion—he is a lawyer, I am not—Clive Ponting would have been vulnerable to being found guilty, as he did not exercise all the options available to him through the normal channels to express his concerns.

I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on bringing to the House a Bill for which the House and country have waited for so long. We all know how unusable and dangerous the Official Secrets Act 1911 has been, but we all are aware of the difficulties that Government's of both complexions have encountered. Finally, the nettle has been grasped. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should congratulate the Government on doing that.

Of course, the Bill upsets some people—I shall avoid calling them the obfuscators: let us say, the perpetrators —who take advantage of the sheer unusability of the 1911 Act. The prospect of having an Act that will be usable causes anxiety in some quarters, but the majority of people in the country very much welcome it.

It is important to understand the world in which we live and the sort of information that needs to be kept secret. Lip service is paid to this, and then we move quickly on to the mass of information for which the people are allegedly hungry and thirsty and without which they will not be satisfied. This hunger and thirst may exist more in the minds of politicians and journalists than among our constituents. However, let us accept that it exists and that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) pointed out, there is now a vast mass of information that was not available before. When it is enacted, this Bill will release huge amounts of information into the public domain which now exist in a grey area. But there remains a crucial area that must be protected, and I think that the Bill does that.

My interest in the public interest defence arises from my experience as a member of Her Majesty's diplomatic service. I recall with wry amusement the sanctification of Mr. Clive Ponting. He has now been enrolled as a member of the Social Democratic party. It is unfortunate that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is not with us today. He was Foreign Secretary when I was the head of the Foreign Office Department. On many occasions items of information became available to me which I could have done a Ponting with. I could perfectly well have put them in plain brown envelopes and sent them to people who are now my hon. Friends. It would not have occurred to me to do so. Had I done so, the right hon. Member for Devonport, who now welcomes Mr. Ponting with acclamation into his party, would have been rightly outraged and would have launched proceedings under the 1911 Act.

It is important to recognise that Mr. Ponting did not take the opportunities that he had to pursue his concerns through the channels that then existed which, as a result of this legislation, will be greatly enhanced. When challenged with disclosure, he denied it. He took every chance to conceal the origin of the documents and, in the end, passed them not to his Member of Parliament, or to a Privy Councillor, or to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, but to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell),

whose rather special—one might even say idiosyncratic—interest in the affair was well known. That was clearly a politically motivated act. So any defence of the public interest concept mounted on the basis of the Ponting story immediately shows the weakness of the proposition——

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reflect on the bitter personal attack that he has made on Mr. Ponting in circumstances in which the latter has no right of reply. The hon. Gentleman should also put the saga in context. Mr. Ponting was charged under the 1911 Act and acquitted by his peers.

Mr. Whitney: I am well aware of that, and everything that I have said about Ponting I have said in writing before. It is not subject to challenge; it is absolute fact. He was acquitted by his peers, and that shows the inefficacy of the 1911 Act. We need a new one. That is not to say that there is not a propensity for excessive secrecy in the Civil Service. It is a challenge to all Ministers to ensure that that propensity is not pursued to dangerous lengths. That cannot be achieved by legislation on secrecy. The freedom of information legislation in the United States is greatly open to challenge as an effective means of achieving that.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend has hit rather hard and successfully the Ponting long hop bowled by the Opposition on the public interest defence. However, he completely ignored and failed to play the much more devastating ball bowled by, among others, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) on the public interest defence as it applied in the non-prosecution of cases such as that of Mr. Duncan Sandys and the civil servants who briefed Sir Winston Churchill before the second world war about the lack of preparedness of our anti-aircraft defences. My hon. Friend ignores the fact that the public interest defence has helped the free flow of responsible information. It should not be narrowed down to the debatable case of Mr. Ponting.

Mr. Whitney: My hon. Friend takes us to a much more profitable area. However, we have to draw a line somewhere and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup says, we must look at this area in Committee. In general, the Government proposals have the right balance and the structures that are about to be put in place will take account of that. I say at the risk of appearing immodest that if a civil servant feels strongly about an issue he may as well do what I did and leave the Civil Service and enter politics. That option is open to a civil servant.

Some Opposition Members have shown wry amusement about prior publication. They take the view that if people in Moscow know about something why should we not know about it. That fails to understand the nature of the attack on free societies and how that attack has developed in recent years. Let us be clear: the attack continues. While we continue to wish Mr. Gorbachev well about the words that he expresses and hope that they will be translated into reality in terms of improving conditions in the Soviet Union and reducing the pressures of the arms race, the reality is that free societies are still under attack.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) quoted from a United States' statement about that the other day and a Home Office Minister also emphasised that there is no evidence at all that the attack on Western societies has let up in any way. We must understand the nature of that attack. One element of it is the degree of political warfare that relies precisely on the mechanism of prior publication. It is not a question of people in Moscow or anywhere else knowing something before we do and using it to, at the very least, discomfort Western societies.

I shall give the House one example. A foreign magazine published in 1973 the name of the then head of the Security Service, a service which of course did not exist, and neither did the man. Not only was that man's name published in the foreign magazine, but a large photograph of him was published in the British press on the basis of prior publication. The publication of that information endangered the life of the head of the intelligence service and increased the vulnerability of servants of the Crown. The danger was not from the Russians but from a terrorist or some nutter. We all knew where the officer lived and where he dined, and the publication of such information exposes the members of the security services to risk.

Mr. Buchan: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us the name and address and describe the behaviour of the director of the CIA in America?

Mr. Aitken: That can be found on the front cover of *Newsweek*.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) will know that the presence in this country of Mr. Philip Agee was rightly terminated by the Home Secretary in a Labour Government. Mr. Agee was expelled from Britain. His disclosures resulted in the assassination of some CIA officers. Therefore, the danger exists and it arises because of the threat of prior publication. These two areas cause concern to the House, so I hope that hon. Members will take full account of the problems of public interest and the dangers of prior publication.

Mr. Heath: Is my hon. Friend aware that the head of the CIA and the head of the FBI have both taken part in television broadcasts with me in the United States? Everybody knows their names and their faces and knows their views. We have had discussions, we were cheered by the audience and seen by millions who came to watch me.

Mr. Whitney: My right hon. Friend will not be surprised to know that I am well aware of that. I, too, have participated in similar discussions. My right hon. Friend must not have heard me when I said that it was the names of CIA officers in the field who were revealed and those officers were exposed. I know about the practice in the United States, but it was not the practice in this country in 1973 to expose the names of the heads of the security and intelligence services. A small obscure magazine published, I think, in Hull and called, would hon. Members believe, *Lobster* makes a practice of publishing names of gentlemen who are alleged to be members of the security services. That creates danger and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup shares my deep apprehension about that sort of practice being allowed to continue.

I strongly urge the House to take account of the points that I have made and to understand that as well as living in a world of information we live in a world of dangers and threats. I draw to the attention of the House a statement by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey)

[Mr. Whitney]

who was well known last week for playing Father Christmas in Epping and who was the Foreign Secretary in a Labour Government. He said:

"I get no letters whatever about the Official Secrets Act or any of these issues. I think the level of public interest is pretty low. . . ."

Mr. Corbett: Times have changed.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman says that times have changed, but the right hon. Member for Leeds, East said that a few months ago and that remains the position.

5.57 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): No one in the House—or, indeed, in the country at large—doubts that the Official Secrets Act 1911 required amendment, but the circumstances in which the Government are bringing forward the Bill after nine years of deliberation are causing many observers to view its purpose and provisions with the greatest suspicion. The Bill is not brought forward in the context of careful deliberation by the Government on how best to strengthen and secure the democratic right of the citizen to receive as well as to impart information. We have extremely few laws which positively encourage information flows. Secrecy is the curse of British democracy. However, it is upon the availability of official information that a democracy depends, because it enables the citizen to participate effectively in the making and administration of laws and policy.

Although Britain has subscribed to article 10 of the European convention on human rights, which guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental right, we cannot rely upon any specific legislation which ensures that that right is powerfully protected by the judicial system. We need legislation to provide a firm basis of principle to safeguard the conflicting interests of confidentiality, privacy and accessibility of information. The legislation should ensure that in the last resort the right to obtain information is not left to the discretion of a Minister, a civil servant or a judge, but depends upon the law as determined by Parliament, which can be enforced by the courts.

That is why the Democrats strongly advocate a freedom of information Act, not merely to limit the scope of the protection of information by the criminal law but to encourage a pluralistic and participatory democracy. That, after all, has been the approach pursued in many other countries with common law systems like our own —in Canada, Australia and the United States. In the absence of such a measure which could curb the uncontrolled discretion of the public authorities to withhold information, the public are bound to look with a jaundiced eye on a Bill which seems designed more to tighten control over certain categories of information than to advance openness of government.

It seems that the Government have finally decided to legislate primarily because of the Ponting and "Spycatcher" cases. The Ponting case demonstrated that at least a British jury was not prepared to accept that it could not decide whether publication of official information was in the public interest. The Ponting jury appeared to have followed closely the reasoning of the civil law of confidence which recognises that, exceptionally, the public interest can justify a disclosure, even of highly confidential information.

Years after section 2 of the 1911 Act was condemned by the Franks committee, the Government have been forced to recognise that it is no longer a useful instrument to protect information. "Spycatcher", after an expensive and humiliating tour of the courts of the world, ultimately determined that the reportage of what was already in the public domain could not be injuncted. The Bill appears to have been prompted by those two judicial defeats for the Government more than by any regard for the modernisation of the law and the freeing of information.

It must be made clear that, despite what the Home Secretary has said, the Bill does nothing to increase public access to information. It does nothing to reverse the prevailing assumption that information collected on behalf of the public—by public servants and at public expense—should be kept secret. It does nothing to place on the authorities the responsibility for justifying that secrecy. Instead, it continues to charge the public with responsibility to justify access. It perpetuates an undesirable inconsistency between the criminal and civil law of confidentiality, making the obligations to maintain confidentiality more strictly enforceable by criminal penalty than they are by civil remedies, as the civil law of confidence provides that it is a defence of an action of breach that that breach was justified in the public interest.

The scope of section 2 of the 1911 Act is ludicrously wide. It was certainly time to confine tightly the ambit of the criminal law to those matters where disclosure would cause

"serious injury to the interests of the nation",

as the Franks committee put it. It is to be noted that, in abandoning the criminal law in wide areas of official information, the Government propose to tighten the sanctions of the Civil Service discipline code. The Home Secretary did not deny that point when he alluded to these procedures. Although it may be true that the Government are not seeking new powers of injunction, as the Home Secretary said, there is no sign that they wish to abandon their considerable powers to seek injunctions under the civil law to prevent unauthorised information from being published or broadcast. Furthermore, we have heard nothing from the Home Secretary today or in earlier debates about the many statutes—about 100 of them—which make it a specific offence to reveal specific types of information. There is much still to be done to rationalise the law, even within the terms used by the Home Secretary.

I do not argue that there are not certain limited classes of information on which it is appropriate to invoke the sanction of the criminal law, but I fear that by drawing too widely the categories of protected information—those categories in which disclosure constitutes an absolute offence and those in which disclosure is an offence if it is likely to cause harm—the Government risk perpetuating uncertainty in the operation of the law. If there is obfuscation on this, it flows from the language of the Bill, which has already been subjected to considerable scrutiny by the press and those most likely to feel its impact, who undoubtedly find its provisions extremely obscure.

A further matter which has not been raised in the debate is that the Bill appears to invite the further attention of the European Court of Human Rights. The careful and persuasive arguments advanced in the unanimous report of Lord Deedes' committee, set up by

Justice to consider the Bill, strongly show that the Bill is defective in that the limitations that it imposes on freedom of expression are not those that would be regarded as "necessary", as defined in the Handyside and *Sunday Times* cases. In particular, the Deedes committee argued that the requirement only of "damage"—and not of "serious damage", as the Franks committee recommended —cannot constitute such a "pressing need" as to justify criminal sanctions in respect of so fundamental a right as freedom of information.

The Deedes committee further argued that it would be even more difficult to justify limiting that freedom in categories which, under the Bill, would give rise to criminal liability, even though no damage had been proved—the categories relating to security and intelligence, interception of communications pursuant to a warrant, and action authorised by warrant under the Security Service Bill 1988. I hope that the Minister, who has just returned, will answer the case made so powerfully by that unanimous report —that the Bill will offend against article 10 of the European convention on human rights. Will the hon. Gentleman answer the arguments which that report so cogently expressed?

It is highly imprudent of the Government, who hitherto have tried to square their legislation with our international obligations under the European convention, to embark upon a Bill of such doubtful conformity with international law. The "Spycatcher" case brought the Government into ridicule, principally because they did not take proper account of the effect of prior publication. The Government have not tackled that problem effectively in the Bill. It appears that, where the offences are absolute under the Bill, the repetition of previously published information will be a further new offence. The position is less clear where there is a requirement that disclosure is likely to cause harm. In those cases it is apparently intended that matters should be left to the determination of the jury, but I am not entirely clear that that is so.

The provision that in certain cases any disclosure would be an offence, regardless of harm, is far too widely drawn. In particular, clause 3(3), which makes it an offence to publish a leak of any document from another country or international body regardless of the subject matter, is a patent absurdity. I do not see how the Government can begin to defend a proposal that it should be a crime to publish leaks of European Community documents which emanate from Whitehall about, say, pollution, tax reforms or information received from the Food and Agriculture Organisation on nutritional standards. I do not think that the Home Secretary answered that point by talking about the additional requirement of harm.

A further major criticism of the absolute offences is that they depart from the Franks committee's recommendation, particularly in respect of the interception of communications and security and intelligence matters, that they should be offences only if they cause

"serious injury to the interests of the nation".

The same objection may be made to those categories of disclosure where the Bill requires some test of damage. The result of the weak tests of "prejudicing" and of "putting in jeopardy" the national interest is greatly to extend the categories of protected information beyond what the Government proposed in the Protection of Official Information Bill in 1979.

Those are all matters to which the House must return in detail in Committee. I certainly support the call of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) for a long and careful Committee stage. We are dealing with matters of national security and how best to safeguard them. This is possibly a matter of constitutional importance and it is certainly a matter of high security importance. It would be inappropriate for the debate to be in any way truncated when the Bill is of such great significance.

The overwhelming reason why we shall vote against the Bill is that the Government are adamantly opposed to incorporating in the Bill any form of public interest defence. That defence has long been accepted under the civil law of confidence. In the "Spycatcher" case, the House of Lords described the justification of that defence with great clarity. Lord Goff of Chieveley put it in this way:

"It is incumbent upon the Crown in order to restrain disclosure of Government secrets, not only to show that the information is confidential, but also to show that it is in the public interest that it should not be published . . . although in the case of private citizens there is a public interest that confidential information should as such be protected, in the case of Government secrets, the mere fact of confidentiality does not alone support such a conclusion, because in a free society there is a continuing public interest that the workings of Government should be open to scrutiny and criticism."

Although Lord Goff was speaking of the civil law, I see no reason why similar considerations should not operate in criminal law.

At an earlier stage of that case, Sir John Donaldson, the Master of the Rolls, said:

"The press has a legitimate role in disclosing scandals in government. An open democratic society requires that that be so . . . the ability of the press freely to report allegations of scandal in government is one of the bulwarks of our democratic society."

The public interest defence is what will enable crime, abuse of power and scandal to be exposed. Without it, important areas of public administration will remain beyond the purview of Parliament and the press. To accept the public interest defence is not—as the Government wish to imply—to permit leakers, as a matter of subjective judgment, to determine where the public interest lies. That is for the jury.

The Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) showed how the procedural rquirements of the defence could ensure that reasonable steps must first be taken to draw misconduct to the attention of the appropriate authorities before the defence could be invoked. Without such a defence, the Bill will simply ensure that in this country the net of secrecy is cast over wide areas of public administration only to be pulled aside when Ministers, in their discretion, decide that it is right to do so. It is not hard to understand that some Ministers seek to preserve that prerogative. It would be harder to understand the House of Commons being their accomplice. I hope, therefore, that the House will resolve to reject the Bill.

6.13 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I am in some doubt as to whether I can support my right hon. Friends in the Lobby this evening. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will listen to what I have to say. I am no crusader for open government when it comes to the secret services. By their nature, some of their operations, both abroad and at home, must be conducted by means which would be regarded as illegal abroad and at home, unless

[Mr. Julian Amery]

covered by warrant. I am clear about the fact that one cannot put the decisions about such work into commission.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) appeared to come down in favour of the American system. I believe that anyone who has read Mr. Woodward's book, "The Veil" will see that the conduct of American intelligence and covert operations has been completely paralysed by Congress attempting to exercise an overview of those measures. I do not believe either that there is anything to be said for a retrospective supervision by Privy Councillors or judges. I yield to no one in my respect for Privy Councillors, but I consider that only one or two of them would be competent in the matter. Of course, it would be quite wrong of me to put myself forward in such a context!

The failures of the secret services are broadcast, but, of course, their successes are unsung, which is as it should be. Supervision would not have altered the balance except that it might have restrained initiatives and led to omission. I believe that my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench share that general approach. My anxiety is that their recent rigid interpretation of the obligation of lifelong confidentiality may lead to exactly the opposite result to what they want. I shall not go into detail, but my experience is that it has already damaged morale in the services concerned. It has certainly injured the reputation of those services. If that is persisted in, it may lead to the demand for extra-Executive control, which has happened already in the Security Service in the shape of the Bill that was before the House last week. I am concerned that that will not happen for the secret intelligence service.

The obligation of lifelong confidentiality is, of course, right. Those who join the service must take a Trappist vow, but it must be interpreted with some flexibility. There is a human aspect to it. A man—or, in these modern times, a woman—who joins the service has, perhaps, a lifelong career, but must never explain to his friends, his wife, or his children what he is doing. Nobody knows when he goes to the office in the morning what it is about. He can never talk about it when he comes home. Nobody knows whether he has been a success or whether he has been promoted in rank.

Therefore, it is not unreasonable that, when he retires after a lifelong career—he may only have been in part-time service or loosely connected with it, as I have been—he would want to write something about it. So long as what he writes is not prejudicial to the safety of other members of the service, the reputation of the service or the national interest, he should be allowed to do so.

The same is true of the service itself. The British secret services have been held in high esteem all over the world by those who are interested in such matters. How do we maintain that esteem? Of course, partly by secrecy, but partly by allowing the different successes to be known after an appropriate time.

New recruits to the service must also be considered. As a young member of one of those services, I profited a great deal from the memoirs of Paul Dukes and Compton Mackenzie and others, who had been through the mill. What they had to say taught me a lot and in a sense was an inspiration.

I believe that all those matters used to be recognised by the secret services. There was a perfectly good convention that, if one wanted to write, one submitted one's text to the proper authorities and they discussed it with one. If they thought that there was a paragraph or a sentence or, perhaps, names mentioned that would be better omitted, one was told, and most of those who submitted their texts would have agreed. I submitted my books twice and very little censorship was exercised upon them.

I raised this issue when my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) had a debate on this matter earlier in the year. I have also raised it since in correspondence with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who wrote to me to say:

> "I am happy to confirm, . . . that it is and will remain possible for members and former members of those services to publish with authority, without contravening the criminal law. Applications for authority will continue to be received and carefully considered."

I thought that that was reassuring and, as my daughter was getting married on the day of the debate on the Security Service White Paper, I did not join in it nor did I raise any further questions. On reflection, however, I must ask whether my right hon. Friend's statement is reassuring enough. What will be the criterion of reasonable authorisation?

The precedents are not encouraging. I wish to refer to two books that have been commissioned by the Cabinet Office—I am sure that the Minister will know all about them. One is the "History of Deception Strategy in World War II" by Sir Michael Howard, until recently the Regius professor of history at Oxford. That book was commissioned and has been paid for, but, although Sir Michael was assured of its publication, it has been vetoed. However, I understand that the services concerned were happy about the book.

The other similar book is by Mr. Anthony Simpkins, who has written about some of the wartime operations of the Special Operations Executive and MI5. Unless I am mistaken, that book was also commissioned by the Cabinet Office. It had been vetted, and no objections had been raised. The publication of those books has been stopped on a narrow interpretation of the lifelong obligation to confidentiality.

I now come to the Wright case. It is painful for any Government supporter to discuss this. In my experience, it is an example of unparalleled ineptitude in the conduct of administrative affairs by any Administration of which I have known, or indeed read. Had Graham Greene or Evelyn Waugh written a satire about it, it would have been panned by the reviewers as far-fetched.

There was never a chance of success even if the Australian courts had found in our favour, which was extremely unlikely. Publication would have taken place in the United States or elsewhere. Besides, there was no serious reason to deny publication or to deny its import into this country. Looking back, I can see that there was a logic in stopping "Lady Chatterley's Lover" being imported into this country. It might have put the wrong ideas into the heads of wives of landowners or into the heads of their gamekeepers.

Who could have been subverted or who could have suffered from the import of "Spycatcher"? Most of the information had already been made available by Harry Chapman Pincher and, as Mr. Wright has subsequently admitted, a good deal of the book was invented.

I do not want to rub the Government's nose in this more than I can help, but my argument is based on the convention that I have described. The normal course of events is to submit one's book and then have it discussed. My understanding is that Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Wright's lawyer, and Heinemann, the publishers, submitted the text in April 1986 to the authorities. It was rejected and any question of negotiation was rejected by the Treasury Solicitor—I think it was Sir John Bailey—on the ground that the Government were concerned not with what was in the text, but simply with the principle of lifelong confidentiality. The Government refused to discuss it and simply said "No, you cannot do it". Is that true? That is what Mr. Turnbull has told me and what he has published —I cannot vouch for that information, but I hope that the Minister will when he replies.

If what Mr. Turnbull said is true, I think that we have done something of a wrong to Mr. Wright. Precedent would have entitled him to expect that he could have sumitted his text and argued about it. His reputation has been blackened. I believe that one of the Law Lords compared him to Philby, although there is nothing in the book that is, in any sense, treasonable. Of course, he has ben enriched beyond measure. He would have never made £25,000 out of the book if the Government had let it go. If they had paid him £50,000 to stop its publication, he would have done well. But we have blackened his reputation, and we may have done him a considerable wrong.

Then there is the case of Mr. Cavendish. He and his publishers have told me that he submitted his text and that it was rejected on the same grounds. I do not want to press my hon. Friend about this case because I believe that it is still sub judice. I will only note that two thirds of the book can be freely published in England, but none of it in Scotland. That is a rather curious state of affairs.

In the light of those cases and referring back to my right hon. Friend's assurance in his letter to me, I must ask the Minister to spell out the terms under which publication would be reasonably authorised. I hope the Minister would say that authorisation would not be withheld, subject to the excision of anything that endangered personnel, endangered existing or potential operations, endangered technology, or could cause grave embarrassment to the department or service concerned. My hon. Friend should also add that, in event of disagreement with the author, there would be some provision for appeal. I am not suggesting a public or judicial appeal, but appeal to an ombudsman. If I understand the matter correctly, that person is now intended to deal with questions of conscience.

If the Minister cannot give me such information tonight, I will find it hard to support my right hon. Friend in the Lobby, and I suppose that some of us would have to consider drafting an amendment expressing the conditions that I have outlined. I hope that we will not have to do that, because that would be a great bore for the Government and a great bore for those of us who are concerned about this.

This important matter cannot be ducked because a number of books are in the pipeline at the moment. Some I know about, some I do not. Given that the recess is coming, before the Bill reaches the Committee, it would be nice to know that clearance had been given or not unreasonably withheld to those books that are now "on hold" until this debate has taken place.

This is not the only issue in the debate. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) raised a broader scheme of issues to which the House must give attention.

Mr. Aitken: Before my right hon. Friend leaves the crucial argument that he has just made, is he aware that he has put the Government on a devastating spot? An answer is vital. In addition to the cases that he has cited, the entire American system, which works extremely effectively, follows the blueprint that my right hon. Friend has mentioned, but with one important addition. Under the American system, anyone who does break the rule of not getting proper clearance can be hit far harder and far more effectively than we were ever able to begin to hit Mr. Wright.

Mr. Amery: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I had not thought that I had put a devastating bomb under the Government Front Bench, but if I have, so much the better, and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will have interpreted that in the way that my hon. Friend has expressed.

I apologise if I have detained the House too long on this one aspect. However, I have been involved with these services personally in war and afterwards. I was also responsible at the old Colonial Office and at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for some supervision of those services. Britain has been held to be pre-eminent in those services in the past. As hon. Members realise, the services depend on individuals, often with idiosyncratic temperaments. To put it in a coarse way, spies are not civil servants in the ordinary sense, and they must be handled with sensitivity. They are not run of the mill. Failure to recognise that will call down on the services the very thing that I—and I think the Government—want to avoid, namely extra-Executive control of their operations, whether that be through Privy Councillors or judges. If that happened the Government would have put at risk two vital arms of our national safety.

6.31 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): It is unusual for me to participate in a debate on official secrecy. For a good deal of my life I have been concerned with secrecy which comes from censorship of printed matter, in broadcasting or newspapers. I have been less concerned with the Official Secrets Act 1911. However, over the past few years I have taken an interest in what has happened in this country and the crucial changes that have taken place arising from the "Spycatcher" case.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) referred to the harm which might or might not be done through the importation of "Spycatcher" and compared it with "Lady Chatterley's Lover", which was also banned from entering this country. I remember that a friend of mine discovered a copy of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" carefully hidden away in his young son's wardrobe. Unfortunately, his young son had hidden the expurgated edition. My friend was not sure whether he should give his son the unexpurgated edition. The point is interesting because it shows that the apparatus and attitude of secrecy and censorship begins not only in order to prevent punishment but to prevent things from happening. The

[Mr. Norman Buchan]

function of censorship is not to punish—it is to prevent. That poor young soul hiding the expurgated edition is a typical example of that.

If we applied the test of public interest to the decision to pursue "Spycatcher" over two years and asked whether it benefited or harmed our nation, we all know what the answer would be. It is absurd that the Government were not even fearful of that final fear of Governments which is to appear ridiculous because they went ahead with that case.

I had a telephone call from my brother-in-law in Toronto a couple of years ago. He said that he was going to arrive in Prestwick the following Tuesday week because he had a music engagement in England. He asked me if I could meet him at Prestwick. I said, "Certainly. Oh, by the way, can you get me something?" He asked what and I told him I wanted a book. When he asked me which one, I said "Spycatcher". He said, "Of course—I want to get a copy myself and it's on sale in the centre of Toronto." He arrived with a copy of "Spycatcher". He had no problem entering the country and walked in without interference, carrying the book under his arm. The same week, I tried to get an immigrant into this country from India without a copy of "Spycatcher". His face was brown and he was not allowed in—yet my brother-in-law walked in with a banned book. That nonsense is spreading, has increased and ought to be diminished.

One of the most worrying aspects about all this is that the Home Secretary, whom we had previously regarded as a liberal, described the White Paper in the following terms:

"This is not a freedom of information White Paper"—

just in case we thought that it was—

"and we do not propose to introduce a freedom of information Bill."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 1419.]

He was trying to take credit for not introducing a White Paper or a Bill with freedom of information aspects. In fact, he was taking credit for not introducing a freedom of information Bill. That is an extraordinary position for an old liberal to take.

We have seen an extension of censorship this year, although I thought that last year was bad enough in that respect. For most hon. Members today, the main concern is Government secrecy. I am interested in a much wider area, of which secrecy is a part and which is helping to create the atmosphere for the other part. Over the past month, we have seen the introduction of a ban in broadcasting of six named organisations. The effect of that will not be to bring people to trial but to inhibit the directors, writers, producers and actors in much the same way as section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was designed not to punish, but to prevent and to inhibit.

Also this month a Bill was introduced to make the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 permanent. A Bill was also introduced to make councillors take the oath. The Security Service Bill was introduced and will make legal what was hitherto illegal—that is, burgling and bugging. Now we have the Official Secrets Bill. We hoped that the Bill would improve things, but it has not. Under the Bill, offences that were previously not absolute will become absolute. If Ponting were to be tried under these provisions, the argument of the public interest could not stand up and Ponting would be found guilty.

Most of us find that shift worrying. As a result of the Lords' judgment on "Spycatcher", the British news media were finally allowed to report and comment on the contents of the book. Many people believe that the judgment was reached partly because the horse had already bolted. To be fair, the Lords' judgment was more extensive than that. The judgment stated that the Government would have to show that publication of information would be harmful to the public interest before the courts would order an injunction.

Lord Goff said that English common law recognises that:

"In a free society, there is a continuing public interest that the working of Government should be open to scrutiny and criticism."

Intrinsic to their judgment in freeing "Spycatcher" was the public interest in opening Government to scrutiny and criticism.

Des Wilson wanted to know whether there was any single aspect of information that the public ought to receive and are entitled to receive, and which would be secured for us as a result of the Bill. He wanted to know whether the Bill had brought in any fresh information which would be made known to the public. We must consider the absence of any move forward in that respect in this liberalising Bill.

This country is becoming the most secretive of all Western nations. The Government have inverted requirements. In any democratic country information should be known unless evidence is given why it should not. The assumption behind the Government's thinking is that things should not be known unless the Government exempt them and allow them to be known.

There is an obligation on every United States Government agency to make public information available including opinions and orders, records and proceedings. That obligation was extended to all information, not specifically excluded. The assumption of the right to know is there.

The same thing happens in Canada. The Canadian Access to Information Act states:

"The purpose of this Act is to extend the present laws of Canada to provide a right of access to information in records under the control of a government institution in accordance with the principles that government information should be available to the public."

It goes on to refer to exemptions. No such assumption exists in our law, and the Government boast about specifically rejecting such an assumption.

A good deal of all that is due to the Prime Minister's lack of intelligence and imagination. I cannot imagine any person, other than someone under the domination of a second-rate and unimaginative mind, accepting such a state of affairs after all that has happened. We face the problem of an inversion of the right to freedom of information and access.

Both the Security Service Bill and the Bill now before us should be considered together, one in relation to the other. We had every right to expect from them increased democratic supervision of MI5. The "Spycatcher" case is important not in itself but because it drew attention to MI5's behaviour. We expected democratic supervision as a result. We are told that a former Prime Minister was the subject of attempted subversion. That is a serious allegation, yet it has never been properly investigated, not even through a private inquiry being undertaken.

For the first time, we are framing MI5 in a statutory form without there being public examination of its role or of the demands that we should be making of it. Oversight and supervision of MI5 remains entirely in the hands of Ministers, but they are themselves bound to secrecy.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): It is intriguing to hear the hon. Gentleman say that oversight of the security services will be limited strictly to Ministers. If the hon. Gentleman reads the Security Service Bill he will find that it provides for the introduction of a commissioner for precisely that purpose.

Mr. Buchan: The Security Service Bill makes provision for the appointment of a commissioner but not for a Select Committee or even for a committee of Privy Councillors to supervise the service. The commissioner will report to the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister. No provision is made for the publication annually of matters such as those covered, for example, by the Irangate hearings, because MI5's operational circumstances are not included and are to be ignored.

Mr. Allason: The commissioner will publish an annual report, and there will be a complaints tribunal. What more does the hon. Gentleman want?

Mr. Buchan: A great deal more than that. I have said what I want. The hon. Gentleman confirms my claim that any aspects of MI5's organisational operations will be ignored. In America, we saw a crucial investigation into the Executive's very recent behaviour before a Congressional committee and under the gaze of television cameras. In Britain, we cannot even have an investigation into the so-called subversion of the Wilson Government. The American Congress undertakes such investigations within weeks or months, and America is the healthier for that.

The secrecy that obsesses the present British Government results in the population of this country knowing nothing, rather than having a right to know. The Government have made legal that which was illegal, without extending control.

That aspect of both Bills includes a provision for dealing with subversion arising from political or industrial action. That stems from a Prime Minister who has described the miners as enemies of the state. In this Official Secrets Bill, which could have liberated information and removed the atmosphere of secrecy, we see an absence of any improvement. Its real purpose is not to punish, but to create an atmosphere of secrecy—a level of confidentiality beyond all reason. We see that happening in Northern Ireland. Quite apart from the Prime Minister's deficiencies, the events of Northern Ireland are creating an atmosphere in which here, too, things can be done which ought not to be permitted.

There are parallels in the private sector. One of the most appalling cases was that of the man who blew the whistle on de la Roche drugs. He was a private individual who thought to himself, "What is happening is iniquitous", but when his revelations were published he suffered as a result. That was persecution by private interests. It is intolerable that there should be the same kind of persecution of the honest whistleblower in public affairs, though we have taken some steps to deal with that situation.

Throughout history, the honest whistleblower has played a very noble role. He has been forced into doing so. He should be given the chance to legitimise his revelations so that there can be a public trial in which the public interest is considered. Some Conservative Members have been so affected by the Government's attitude to secrecy that they cannot even understand the concept that sometimes a person may have access to confidential material which should not be confidential.

Another worrying aspect has been the Government's tendency, until now, to avoid a case coming to trial by using the Official Secrets Act 1911, fearing that honest juries would respect the honest whistleblower and find in his favour. That is what happened in the Ponting case. In my view, the judge clearly directed the jury to find him guilty, saying that there was no defence of public interest, but the jury said, "This judge is talking rubbish—it is right that we should know such things." The jury went against the law to find Ponting innocent because common sense and decency told them that he should be found not guilty. Now that the Government are failing to make prosecutions stick, and now that the public have largely rumbled the Government, the Government are changing the statute and turning to the law of confidentiality so that a law which was intended to deal with commercial situations can be used in public matters.

Allied to my arguments about the public dissemination of information is the Lobby, which is another instrument in the Government's creation of secrecy, enabling the Government to manipulate news. I hope that the blow that the Lobby has received in respect of the Queen and the Russian invitation and other matters will have an effect.

I shall not review the entire Bill, but I agree entirely with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that the place for detailed examination is in Committee. However, I make again the point that the Bill has not brought the emancipation that we expected, and the opportunity has not been taken to secure control over secrecy. On the contrary, the Bill makes absolute that which was not absolute before. It comes at a time when the press has even less opportunity to investigate matters of public interest.

The United States has its Congressional apparatus for investigation, and we used to be able to claim that in this country at least we had a diffuse press and public service broadcasting which perhaps could remedy certain deficiencies, but that is no longer true. The press is now in the hands of three men—a "tripoly" or triple monopoly. It is dedicated to stories about pop stars, royalty, and so on. It is no longer the investigative press of 20 years ago when we had the iconoclastic *Daily Record* on the one hand and the views of Lord Beaverbrook in the *Daily Express* on the other. Still, they printed far more important news on their front pages than they do today.

The modern press is totally ineffective. My concern is that as the Government's apparatus of secrecy is developed, so the apparatus to cope with it by our mass communications will deteriorate. Our public service broadcasting structure is also being destroyed. It is passing into commercial hands—the same hands of Maxwell and Murdoch—who control the mass media and none of whom find it necessary to protect the public interest by disseminating certain information.

Anyone reading Margaret Drabble's article in *The Guardian* today will understand the depth of feeling among civilised people about what is happening to our country. Recently I spoke to an unlikely informant. He is a Communist, and a journalist who has represented the

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Italian newspaper *Unita* in Paris for many years. When he was in Britain recently, he said to me, "Norman I have always regarded Britain as the bourgeois country in excelcis—respectable, orderly, neat and clean. I see dirt, filth and squalor around and I see that your papers have degenerated—we used to send for them." That is the voice of a Communist who sees that we are now incapable of expressing our best liberal position. I am talking about a man who understood something about our civilisation in Britain and who honoured it. We are becoming a sleazy, second-rate country. We have had liberals in Government who now boast that they are not bringing in a Bill on freedom of information. We are facing a major crisis in the combination of inadequate media and a secretive press. Censorship, directly or indirectly, has increased and is increasing—and by God, it ought to be diminished.

6.51 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): On 5 February 1960, in a maiden speech on the Public Bodies (Admission of the Press to Meetings) Bill, an hon. Member stated:

"the paramount function of this distinguished House is to safeguard civil liberties rather than to think that administrative convenience should take first place in law."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1357-8.]

The Bill before us seeks to replace an Act that makes it illegal to reveal trivia or what is embarrassing to Government with a law that is confined to official information when its unauthorised disclosure would cause unacceptable harm to the public interest. By supporting it, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has re-emphasised a conviction that she first stated in her maiden speech.

No one can deny that the Official Secrets Act is a geriatric absurdity which is incapable of functioning correctly. No one can ignore the fact that the Bill removes from criminal jurisdiction a wide range of offences, whole classes of people and a mass of trivia. However, all should accept that, for the security and safety of us all, there are some secrets that need to be kept and some people who need to keep them.

If one unquestioningly accepted some of the comments culled from the press and quoted by the Opposition, especially in the debate on the White Paper, one might be tempted to believe that the Bill had no friends at all. However, I have scanned the pages as well, and I have come up with some rather different reactions from some rather odd sources. In the comment column of *The Guardian* of 30 June, there is the sentence:

"Mr. Hurd tries some welcome things."

Hugo Young, in the same newspaper on 5 July, talks of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary

"importing some sanity to the criminal law".

The Times of 30 June states:

"Mr. Douglas Hurd deserves to win a wide measure of praise for the reform of the Official Secrets Act."

Mr. Corbett: What about *The Independent*?

Mr. Sayeed: I shall come to *The Independent* in a moment. The *Financial Times* of 30 June, in an article entitled "A Limited Reform", begins one paragraph with the sentence:

"Some of it is very good",

and goes on to call the measure

"A tidying up exercise with a slightly liberal bent".

The Independent of 30 June states:

"Mr. Hurd has produced ideas which are more liberal than had been anticipated".

The Economist of 2 July gave the Bill "two cheers". If one considers the origin of those statements and the media's wish for unrestricted access to almost everything, those guarded endorsements can be construed as grudging praise.

I want to deal with two aspects of the Bill that have particularly exercised hon. Members—that there should be a public interest defence, and that there should be a defence of prior publication. As we know, under current law there is no public interest defence. Under the Bill, the blanket provision will be circumscribed. However, it would be absurd for anyone and everyone to be able to pray in aid a public interest defence on all occasions. We need to understand that the moment when the decision is made about whether a disclosure is in the public interest is not when the court decides on the matter, but when the original disclosure is made. The court merely confirms or rejects that assessment—the harm will have been done.

Hon. Members have, by necessity, to develop a breadth —if not a depth—of vision. Yet we have all come across people who suffer from tunnel vision and who so concentrate on the particular that they fail to develop the span of understanding that is essential to see clearly. I am not prepared to believe, despite what has been said, that if the editors of our great newspapers believed that a great public mischief had been perpetrated, they would be unwilling to hazard themselves to expose it. Under the harm test, they could argue that their disclosures had caused good, not harm, to the public, and a British jury would decide on that.

A Crown servant is a different case. Crown servants are elevated to a position of trust and are duty-bound to respect the confidence placed in them. Yet should they discover what they believe to be corruption or malpractice, they have not only the facility but the duty to report their concern to the permanent secretary, to the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services, to the Minister or even to the head of the Civil Service. Does anyone, apart from the conspiracy theorist, believe that such safeguards will not be sufficient in a democracy in which trial by jury is enshrined? If some people are still unconvinced, are they not willing to accept that a person would be prepared to hazard his or her livelihood and liberty to expose gross misconduct, especially when Parliament with its privileges, and the courts with their juries, are there to protect the individual against the abuse of power by the Executive?

I would argue against the suggestion that there should be a defence of prior publication. It has been suggested that, once a piece of information is in the public domain anywhere in the world, and of whatever origin or status, people should be free to publish it. By publishing it, they will promote it and add to its status. Although I in no way question the motives of those who hold such a view, it is the product of muddled thinking. Cannot they see that such a defence would encourage the disclosure of unauthorised and, possibly, damaging information? Cannot they see that there are only a finite number of solutions to a given problem, so such a defence would encourage irresponsible journalists to embark on fishing expeditions? Do they not understand that to permit the uncontrolled repetition of stories emanating from the

foreign media whose aims, interests and standards of accuracy and probity are different from our own would do nothing to enhance the safety and security of our people?

For very good reasons, successive Governments have refused to confirm or deny a story, even when it was in their short-term interests to do so. Sometimes the consequence is that confidence is needlessly undermined and fear is unnecesarily caused. The defence of prior publication would increase that likelihood. It would be a recipe for mischief-making and would be in no one's interest.

I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so I have confined myself to dealing with the suggestions that there should be a blanket defence of prior publication and an automatic defence of public interest. I shall conclude with the observation that, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, the Bill is not a freedom of information Bill—nor should it be. It is a Bill that seeks to inhibit the disclosure of information that, if divulged, could threaten us all. I am satisfied, as the House should be, that there are secrets that need to be kept and people who need to keep them. The Bill clarifies which they are and who they are, and it is to be commended.

6.59 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Bill has little to do with safeguarding national security, because there are very few real secrets, and they are certainly not permanent secrets. Details of military equipment become outdated. The secrets of negotiating positions, which are prepared for Ministers when they go to international conferences, become public knowledge when they are disclosed in the negotiations. Economic particulars that may be exchanged between Governments expire with the passage of time.

I remember vividly one occasion when I was the Minister in charge of atomic energy. I had in front of me the most secure documents, headed "TOP SECRET: ATOMIC UK eyes only". However, I read the newspapers, and the same information appeared in the *New Scientist*. What was secret was that my paper stated what we knew we could do, whereas the *New Scientist* was saying what it thought could be done in respect of the centrifuge. Therefore, it is absurd to speak as though the Bill is necessary to protect such information.

The Bill was devised, drafted and presented deliberately to conceal from the electors information that they need to exercise their democratic functions. Discussion about the Bill has skirted the real question. What we are discussing is a constitutional Bill because today we are discussing not just the details of individual disclosures but the relationship of power between Government and governed. Nothing is more relevant to the power relationship than how much knowledge is available to the two parties.

To read a Bill that is alleged to defend democracy when there is no reference in it to the rights of the electors, or the rights of the people, is a revelation of what the Bill is about. It does not have to be a freedom of information Bill to suggest that the people of this country have some rights. Although I am sure that it is not necessary, I remind the House that we only borrow the power of the electors on polling day. That power is entrusted to the Government by the electors on loan, and the electors then decide whether to renew their confidence at the subsequent general election. If, in the period of office of any Government, the public are denied knowledge of what the Government or the state are doing, they cannot exercise that right. It is important to recognise that we are discussing matters that may not be known even to Ministers.

I was somewhat amused by the Home Secretary's attempt to present himself as a great reformer. I looked up the Witchcraft Act 1735 because I had a distant memory that I was in the House when it was repealed. I was right: it was repealed in 1951 by the Fraudulent Mediums Act 1951. Some poor woman who was a fraudulent medium had been prosecuted by an anxious policeman under the Witchcraft Act because he could not think of anything else to get her for.

I sat in Parliament when the Witchcraft Act—or a part of it—was still on the statute book. However, I do not remember the Law Officer who presented the later Act saying, "This is an earthquake of reform." Indeed, he was a bit embarrassed that the Witchcraft Act was still on the statute book, as Ministers should be about the Official Secrets Act 1911. The Act is being changed not because of a wave of liberalism from the Home Secretary, but because it is absurd, unworkable, unpopular and unenforceable, so let us hear a little less about the reforming achievements of the Home Secretary.

When one considers constitutional questions, many issues arise that are not often discussed. The one that most interests me is the lifelong obligation of confidentiality to the Crown. Crown servants are identified. However, we must ask, what is the Crown? Who is the Crown? Where do we find the Crown giving orders to anybody? "The Crown" is a code for that concreted area, the state within a state, which the Government believe needs to be more forcibly protected.

I am a Crown servant, as I have been a Minister. I looked in the Bill to see whether I too am obliged to have lifelong confidentiality to the Crown, and I am. It is absolutely clear. Back-Bench Members of Parliament who have never held ministerial office are not. However, as I look around the Chamber, I see other Crown servants who would be covered by the Bill.

When we consider "the Crown" in respect of secret matters, we must ask where it fits in. I shall take the Peter Wright case. Did the Queen say to Peter Wright, "Get rid of Harold Wilson"? No. Well then, who was the Queen's first Minister? It was Harold Wilson. Did he say to Peter Wright, "Get rid of me"? No. Did the Cabinet say to Peter Wright, "Get rid of Harold Wilson"? No—the Cabinet never knew. Did Parliament say it? No. The truth is that for the purpose of the Bill, "the Crown" is the language used to protect the activities of people who are no friends of democracy, the secret services which believed that in trying to get rid of Harold Wilson they were answering the wishes of the Crown. We are discussing a major constitutional Bill.

Let us consider the way in which the secrets are supposed to appear and must be protected. I can think of some examples, including Martin Gilbert's biography of Winston Churchill—this was touched on earlier—which reveals that, before the war, civil servants gave masses of secret documents to Winston Churchill because they thought that Neville Chamberlain was betraying the national interest by failing to re-arm. The first time that I came to the House—in 1937—I heard Churchill speaking on the Naval Estimates. I did not know, seeing him surrounded with his Blue Books and White Papers, that he

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was also getting a steady drip of information from civil servants who thought that Neville Chamberlain was a traitor. But that is a fact.

I could take more recent cases. The Sandys case has been referred to. Duncan Sandys was a captain in the Territorial Army. One of his mates in the Territorial Army told him that the anti-aircraft defence of London was defective. Sandys tabled a question. The officer who told him was prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. It became a famous parliamentary case. Would such a case be stopped by the Bill?

Let us consider the Zircon case, when Mr. Speaker—I sympathise with him—was lectured on the absolutely vital necessity that nobody should see the film. Mr. Speaker, not knowing how to respond to an appeal from Ministers, banned the Zircon film. Was that film so secret and so damaging? What was secret about the Zircon film? I can tell the House that it was the fact that Sir Frank Cooper, the former permanent secretary to the Ministry of Defence, said in the film that we did not have an independent deterrent. That was very embarrassing, since the Government had been pretending for years that we did have one.

We could consider also the Belgrano case, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is always referring. It would have been damaging to let it be known that the Conqueror was pursuing the Belgrano while it was happening, but it is in the public interest to know whether the Government knew that the Belgrano was going home, and the relevance of the Peruvian peace objective. We cannot justify this legislation by example.

I turn now to international examples which are even more relevant although rather less pregnant with security considerations. I was the President of the Council of Ministers for Energy in the EEC eleven years ago. While there, I was a legislator. I do not know how many people realise that Ministers in the EEC are legislators, not executives. The Executive is the Commission. When one goes to the Council of Ministers—my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has attended the Council—one makes regulations. Before the regulations are made, there is a mass of negotiation between one's Department, other Departments, Departments in other countries and the Committee of Permanent Representatives—all negotiate the package which the Commission will consider and the Ministers then endorse. All that is now to be covered by the new restrictions in the Bill.

As President Jacques Delors has said, 80 per cent. of the legislation enacted by national Parliaments will soon be enacted by the Commission. Eighty per cent. of the legislation that we now discuss in Parliament which is reported in *Hansard* for all to see and which will soon be televised will be covered by the new Official Secrets Bill because of its international implications. The Bill will cover not only the EEC but our international military arrangements or our discussions with the International Monetary Fund, in which other countries negotiate.

The Bill would reduce public discussion of public affairs to municipal matters. We would be allowed to discuss only things that are purely municipal—things that are about England or the United Kingdom alone. We will not be allowed to enter a discussion of issues that touch on international negotiations. That is a major restriction. It is, however, a product of the internationalisation of the world, not a product of this Government.

The danger of abuse is the greatest in regard to intelligence. I shall speak in a measured way because I am sure that there are fine public servants in the security services who are trying to do their best. Nevertheless, the danger of abuse is very great. Ted Short, formerly Lord President of the Council, was told by Chapman Pincher that he, Pincher, had access to a Swiss bank account which Ted Short was supposed to have had. It was a forged bank account. There is no question about it being forged by the security services.

Mr. Allason: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I am not giving way for the moment, because I want to finish this point.

In his book, Peter Wright said—he was, after all, the deputy director—that the fabrication of evidence against Labour Ministers was part of the strategy. Even if it is only Wright confessing, at least we got an explanation later of one of the most revolting episodes that I recall—involving the use of civil servants loyal to the Crown to destroy a Government elected by the people to be the Crown's Administration. I hope that the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) wants, to raise a serious point, because I am on one.

Mr. Allason: The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned the famous Ted Short letter. All the research that has been done to determine the origin of that forged letter has come down to a group of Socialist Workers in Leicester. As for the Peter Wright plot against Harold Wilson, I do not know how many times we must repeat that Peter Wright went on television in the "Panorama" programme of 15 October when he said that the plot was down to him and that he was the only person in it.

Mr. Benn: I believe that the hon. Gentleman was in the Security Service or writes about it—I do not know much about it. All I can say is that the evidence on Nasser is Anthony Nutting, who said on television that Eden had told him to get rid of Nasser. There is a lot of other evidence. If the hon. Gentleman really has served in the Security Service—I do not know whether he has or whether he just writes about it—he will know that assassination is one of the instruments of security.

Mr. Allason: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I am not giving way again, because I was not on the Nasser point.

Mr. Allason: But he was not assassinated.

Mr. Benn: When the hon. Gentleman intervened, I was talking about the fabrication of Ted Short's bank account. I am afraid that, if any structure of power is surrounded by secrecy, there is a danger of abuse.

I remember when, as a Minister, I was approached by a Conservative Member of Parliament who complained on behalf of a constituent that that constituent could not get into the Civil Service. As I am a libertarian, I took the case up. I discovered that the constituent's father read the *Morning Star*. Nobody should think that the Security Service does not want to veto anybody who is to the left of the Prime Minister. It tried to veto Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, who were pillars of the Government.

Conservative Members may not like them, but the Security Service regarded them as security risks. The only guarantee against that is bringing these matters into the open.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, on 28 October, during a seminar for opinion leaders at the NATO defence college in Rome, the Pentagon-sponsored tutor in one of the tutorials—Dr. Robert McGeehan—said that we have come to the time when we must deprive our politicians of our best intelligence because of the way in which they have chosen to distort and misrepresent it in the defence of democracy?

Mr. Benn: The enemy within may be somewhere other than where the Prime Minister thinks it is.

I shall tell the House another story, lest it be thought that I am trying merely to protect the Left. In the 1974 general election campaign, somebody brought to me, and tried to persuade me to use, a highly scurrilous and scandalous pamphlet about the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who was then Prime Minister. It was an extremely libellous document. I would not touch it. I realised later, when I read what I read, that the idea was to discredit me by getting me to smear the right hon. Gentleman and to discredit the right hon. Gentleman by getting that smear spread. I do not think that only Harold Wilson was toppled. I think that two Prime Ministers were toppled.

It would be a great mistake for Conservative Members to think that this is a Left versus Right issue. I ask Conservative Members to contemplate what they would think about a Labour Government with the powers that they are proposing to entrust to a Conservative Government. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, I can envisage circumstances in which it might be thought highly desirable to bug and burgle the homes of people engaged in exporting capital to South Africa. It is the Conservative party which proposes to entrust such powers to the Government. There are some issues in the House—not many—when the legislature has an interest that is separate from the Executive.

The last Labour Government have been mentioned. Jim Callaghan was bitterly opposed to open government. Everybody knew that. Everybody knew it at the time. It was only because it looked as though Clement Freud's Bill would be accepted that he, then the Prime Minister, put me on the relevant Cabinet Committee. He thought that he had better have somebody on the Cabinet Committee who agreed with Clement Freud and might interpret his Bill.

This is an argument between the legislature and the Executive. We are not talking about the great supporters of private enterprise versus the revolutionaries from the Fabian Society.

The House is being asked to give Ministers the power to designate what is secret and to determine when to prosecute. That is a power which no Parliament should give to any Government. I hope that the House will reject the Bill or amend it, or that the Government will withdraw it. If it is enacted, there will be only one safeguard for democracy. I refer to the oldest and most reliable safeguard—that people with conscience will not obey the law. Parliament never likes being told what it needs to be reminded of each generation, but the rights to free speech and to free religious worship were won by people who broke unjust laws. I believe that juries will refuse to convict.

The Bill is really aimed against Ponting, Massiter and Tisdall. Only the last was sentenced. If people of conscience in the security services—those who favour the security services must want people of conscience in them —come across skulduggery, blackmail or criminal fabrication of information, and make it public on conscientious grounds, that is the safeguard of democracy in Britain, not this shabby little Bill.

When this debate comes to be studied, it may turn out that, by opening up on questions that we do not normally discuss, we will find ourselves tracing our way back to the roots of democracy. Honest, decent people will not put up with injustice, even if it becomes entrenched in a statute passed by both Houses of Parliament.

7.18 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The longer I listened to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the more I wondered whether he had been studying the same Bill. He and a number of other Opposition Members need to have a conspiracy theory in order to exist. Without such a theory, the right hon. Gentleman would find it difficult to have a role in contemporary politics.

Spies spying and leaks leaking always make good copy for journalists. The area is too often treated sensationally and with too much drama. We, by contrast, must act rationally and logically, remembering at all times that we are putting criminal law on the statute book. We must consider the public mischief that we seek to defeat and the public good that we wish to protect and promote. We must test the provisions of the Bill against those objectives. We must ensure, at all times, that the possible offences and defences strike a proper balance between the rights of the community and the position of the defendant. The public good that we seek to protect is straightforward. It is to protect information vital to the national interest, not information that might simply embarrass the Government of the day or any Minister.

This is not a catch-all Bill and it does not contain any catch-all provisions. It is a clearly drafted and narrowly defined measure which sets out with clarity a limited number of specific offences. The Bill is comparatively short. Its 16 clauses contain a number of defined and specific offences intended to protect the public good. Such is the care to strike exactly the right balance that invariably, to prove an offence, the prosecution will have to clear a number of specific hurdles, and to the jury's satisfaction, fulfil specific tests—of, for example, harm to the public interest—before a conviction can succeed.

For example, to secure a conviction when a journalist discloses information relating to security or intelligence, the prosecution must clear a steeplechase of hurdles. We should never forget that the burden of proof is always on the prosecution, and the standard of proof is that the jury must be satisfied that each hurdle has been cleared. If the prosecution fails at any of the hurdles, the entire prosecution case fails.

To secure a conviction against a journalist for disclosing information on intelligence, the prosecution must prove, first, that the information has been in the possession of a Crown servant or Government contractor in his official capacity. Secondly, the journalist must know

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

or have reasonable cause to believe that it has. Thirdly, it must relate to security or intelligence as defined in the Bill. Fourthly, the journalist must know or have reasonable cause to believe that it does. Fifthly, the information must come into the journalist's possession in a number of ways, such as being disclosed without authority by a Crown servant or Government contractor. Sixthly, the journalist must know or have reasonable cause to believe that the information has reached him by one of those three routes. Seventhly—the canal turn—the journalist must make his disclosure without authority. Eighthly, the journalisit's disclosure must cause damage to the work of the security and intelligence services. Ninthly, the journalist must have known or had reasonable cause to believe when he made his disclosure that it would, or was likely to, cause damage, or that the information fell into a class or description of information likely, if disclosed, to cause damage—Becher's brook. That is a veritable steeplechase of hurdles, all of which the prosecution must clear before it can secure a conviction.

I suspect that it is because editors and journalists appreciate the hurdles that the prosecution must clear that there has been little press criticism of the Bill.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): My hon. Friend has accurately set out the hurdles that the prosecution has to clear.

Mr. Corbett: The Minister wrote them for him.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman seems rather overexcited this evening. I cannot imagine why.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) has accurately described the hurdles that the prosecution must successfully pass to secure a conviction. Does he accept that a conviction can be found against a journalist only if the prosecution can prove that the journalist knew, or had good cause to know, that he was deliberately causing harm?

Mr. Baldry: Yes—*[Laughter.]* I do not know why the Opposition are laughing. They complain that this is a catch-all Bill, but when we take them step by step through a single clause showing them all the hurdles that the prosecution must clear before it can secure a conviction they will not acknowledge the facts.

Mr. Allason: That was an interesting exchange. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to clause 4(3)(b), under which the disclosure of information is an absolute offence. This is one area in which the burden of proof would be not on the prosecution but on the defence. The defence would have to show that it did not know or had no reasonable cause to believe that the information disclosed was of the type described in the Bill.

Mr. Baldry: In criminal statutes the burden of proof never moves to the defendant. The defendant is entitled to raise a defence and it is then for the prosecution to negate that defence.

I opened *The Times* and other newspapers today expecting ringing declarations against the Bill, but there was none. The press appreciates, even if the Opposition do not, the great care that has been taken to get the balance right.

Mr. John Patten: Does my hon. Friend agree that the frivolous attitude displayed on the Labour Front Bench shows that the Opposition have not read or understood the Bill, whereas the journalists and editors of our great national newspapers have read the Bill and understand the considerable protections that are offered to them? That is why they no longer criticise the Bill on those points.

Mr. Baldry: As I listened to the speeches of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and subsequent speeches from the Opposition, I came to believe that they could not have studied the same Bill as we did. I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that they are all provided with another copy.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to know the cause of the outbreak of laughter in the middle of his speech. I was just telling my hon. Friends about a letter sent by the Minister of State to a newspaper setting out eight hurdles which journalists had to overcome. We were enjoying hearing the hon. Gentleman read it during his speech.

Mr. Baldry: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman acknowledges that those hurdles exist because nowhere in his substantive speech today did he recognise that the Bill has been tightly defined and narrowly drafted to ensure that a proper balance was struck. If one listened only to the right hon. Gentleman, one would think that the Bill had many catch-all provisions, which it clearly has not.

It is clear that Ministers and draftsmen have taken great care to get the balance right in the Bill and to define more clearly than was possible in the White Paper the areas that should remain in the criminal law and the harm test that should apply. Under clause 3(1)(b) information received in confidence from overseas Governments or international organisations will not be the subject of an absolute offence. It will be subject to the same harm test as information on international relations. The harm test is narrowed by replacing the general reference to prejudicing dealings between the Government and that of another state or an international organisation with the more specific test of jeopardising the interests of the United Kingdom abroad. No hon. Member could object to the clarity with which that is now defined.

The definition of information likely to be useful to criminals, which was criticised as being too wide, has been narrowed to information that

"results in the commission of an offence . . . facilitates an escape from legal custody . . . impedes the prevention or detection of offences or the apprehension or prosecution of suspected offenders".

A jury would have to be convinced that unauthorised disclosure had, or was likely to have, that effect. What possible objection could there be to any one of those elements in that clause?

Since the publication of the White Paper, my right hon. and hon. Friends have sought to take on board the views expressed to them and to ensure that the Bill strikes exactly the right balance. It is a well defined Bill. Much of the opposition to it stems from the claim that it contains no defence of public interest and no defence of prior publication. That shows a complete misunderstanding of the Bill. On the question of public interest where there is a harm test under which a defendant could argue that the disclosure caused good, not harm, to the public interest. It would be for the jury to decide. Opposition Members appear to have forgotten the existence of those 12 men and

women. However, a defendant could not argue that, although his disclosure did cause a degree of harm, because it also did some good the harm did not matter. That has never been a principle of English criminal law, so the Bill is consistent with legal history.

On the question of prior publication, under the harm test a defendant could argue that he had caused no harm beyond that created by the earlier publication. It would be for the prosecution to prove otherwise, and the standard of proof would have to be such that a jury was certain that an offence had been committed. The prosecution must overcome those hurdles.

It does not lie in the mouths of Opposition Members to criticise the Bill's lack of public interest and prior publication defences. They should not forget that in 1978 the then Labour Government proposed no defence based on public interest or on prior publication. Indeed, they did not go anywhere near so far as this Government in providing a test of harm. The Labour Government provided for the binding use of ministerial certificates so that at the end of the day it was the Minister and not the jury who decided the case there, there has been a veritable bonfire of ministerial certificates. We must study the reality of what the Bill proposes. My right hon. Friend referred to it as obfuscation, but I do not think that Opposition Members have read the Bill.

The Bill is a sensible, balanced measure that will do much to restore a sense of proportion to this whole area of law, and the sooner it reaches the statute book the better. I hope that as the Bill goes through its Committee stage we can debate the reality of what it does and what it contains, and the actuality of what it says, rather than having a debate based on the conspiracy theories invented by some Opposition Members.

7.34 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): There is not a piece of Government legislation about which the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) could not make the same favourable speech, with only slight changes in the odd sentence. It was a lapdog speech. The hon. Gentleman made no attempt to answer any of the legitimate points made by hon. Members from both sides of the House. It has not been a one-sided debate.

Had the Home Secretary felt able to include a public interest defence somewhere in the Bill, that would have gone a long way towards lessening some of the natural suspicions that were bound to arise. It is no good Ministers lecturing the House and saying that there will be an opportunity to put that defence to a jury—one which, in any case, would be vetted. The fact is that the words "public interest" do not appear in the Bill. The first hurdle put up in a court against the use of a public interest defence would be the fact that it was not specifically mentioned in the legislation.

It is not as though "public interest" as a phrase is not important. Paragraph 65 of the White Paper, under the heading "Other Offences, Enforcement and Extent", states:

> "The central mischief at which the Government's proposals are aimed is the unauthorised disclosure of information the publication of which is harmful to the public interest."

According to that White Paper, that is what the Bill is all about. There has been no change between the publication of the White Paper and the publication of the Bill that takes away the significance of the first sentence of paragraph 65 of the White Paper.

Two Conservative Members have quoted extensively from the many newspapers and magazines that they obviously read daily. The hon. Member for Banbury made the specific allegation that not a single newspaper today carried any criticism of the Bill. That is palpable nonsense. The hon. Gentleman clearly has not read today's newspapers; he has read only the information in the briefing given to him by the Conservative party. He should look at today's *The Independent*, whose leader title is "Hurd's undemocratic society". The last sentence of the leader states:

> "If Mr. Hurd would trust the people, he would reduce the temptation for public servants to stray. Unfortunately he cannot bring himself to do so."

The Independent is not a Labour-supporting newspaper; thank heavens it is not, by and large, a Tory supporting newspaper either. It is a newspaper of record which does not agree with the Bill. Conservative Members come to the Chamber and trot out their briefs, for all the world as though the press carried no opposition to the Bill. That is not the case.

In Committee we can discuss in greater detail the defence of public interest. We must separate public interest, Government interest, state interest and, in the Britain of the 1980s, party interest. The problem is that the words "public interest" do not appear in the Bill. Judges —not all, but some—have said that state interest and Government interest are one and the same. It is just a short step from there to perceiving damage to the interests of a Government as damage to the interests of the Government's party. We must keep a distinction in mind.

Judging from the Home Secretary's speech and Home Office press releases—the one that was released on the date of publication of the Bill and the one that was put out by the Minister on 14 December—the Government are concerned to float the idea that, if the Bill is passed, key areas of security intelligence and defence, international relations and criminal investigations are to be dealt with, tied up and codified. There is the idea that it naturally follows that any journalists, investigators or Members of Parliment who claim that Britain is still a secret society will be brushed aside as a group of misguided individuals—the obfuscators to whom the Home Secretary referred. There is the idea also that lots of information will be released. We know that it is not a freedom of information Bill, but because the Official Secrets Bill covers matters of supreme importance, such as security, intelligence and defence, anyone who says that there are still secrets in other aspects of life is misguided and a troublemaker, and does not know what he is talking about. That is the idea that is supposed to get abroad.

I shall refer to only one part of the Bill—clause 3, which is entitled "International relations". International relations are defined in subsection (5). However, international relations go much wider that that. One would suppose that the clause covered only intergovernmental communications of various kinds. Naturally it does that. However, it covers information, documents or other articles relating to international relations and any confidential information, documents or articles which do not relate to international relations but which were obtained outside the United Kingdom. International relations may not be covered, but,

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

because the information was obtained from states or international organisations outside the United Kingdom, they are covered by clause 3.

The disclosure in clause 3(2) is a major drafting error. Paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* are linked by the word "or", yet one cannot read *(b)* without reading *(a)*. It does not make sense. The term "those effects" has no meaning in paragraph *(b)* unless it is read in conjunction with *(a)*. Paragraph *(b)* is supposed to stand quite separately.

The disclosure of confidential information that is obtained from abroad is an offence only because the information is confidential. It is irrespective of the contents of the documents or articles. I warn the Government that that point will be considered in great detail in Committee. They will do themselves and the House a service if they tidy it up or even withdraw it from the Bill by way of a Government amendment. How can one defend the idea that people can obtain information from states, international organisations abroad, Crown servants—that global expression for those who are part of the state apparatus abroad—on matters that do not affect industrial relations can affect anything under the sun?

If an offence is committed, it does not matter whether an issue is harmful, but only whether it concerns a document marked "confidential". That cannot be sustained. The briefing document that was issued to hon. Members by the Campaign for Freedom of Information on that point is valuable, and I have not heard it being refuted. If the Ministers attempt to do so, I shall be pleased to listen to and argue with them.

Mr. Aitken: Far from refuting the hon. Gentleman's case, I may be able to confirm it. Anyone who shares my experience of *The Sunday Telegraph* case will note that the clause is drafted with that experience in mind. The Foreign Office cannot distinguish between embarrassment and security. Because Ministers fear that some embarrassment may be incurred that is already used, in a press briefing, as the Scott report was, but causes embarrassment to our diplomatic relations, they slap it in as a criminal offence. That is wrong. The hon. Gentleman was right to zero in on it.

Mr. Rooker: That is the only point on which I wish to zero in. An extra test is applied to that information. It applies only to information from overseas sources. If I may paraphrase clause 3(3), it states that information may be regarded as likely to have any of the effects mentioned in the paragraph,

"either by reason of the fact that it is confidential or by reason of its contents and nature."

It does not state "and by reason of its contents and nature"; it states "or by reason of its contents and nature". How it can be an offence simply because the information is confidential is beyond the pale, especially given the Home Secretary's description of the Bill as coherent, bolder and more open than anything before. It is quite ludicrous.

I understand why the clause is in the Bill, but I do not support why it is there. The scale of international trade and relations in the modern world is such that much information—not that relating to the matters that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) raised—turns out to be economic information. Classes of economic information are ruled out in paragraph 33 of the White Paper, and will no longer be subject to the criminal law. We shall see an enormous number of contradictions. We shall see contradictions in relation to information that comes to Britain or is used or disclosed in Britain by journalists, the media, or Members of Parliament. It is sourced overseas. It may have been originally sourced in this country by our supplying information to overseas organisations, such as the OECD.

We shall ask why it is an offence to publish and disclose information in EEC documents that emanated from Whitehall about pollution control. A document may or may not be about hazardous waste or a danger to public health, but it may set out the amount of industrial and other waste that this country imports. There are court cases in the midlands because the economic livelihood of one large company is thought to be at stake. The bottom line is economics.

It will be argued that disclosure should be an offence. The Government are arguing that that is the case. I do not accept that case. We may get information on industrial safety or vocational training from the International Labour Organisation. It will be an offence to disclose it. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) mentioned Food and Agriculture Organisation nutritional standards. What about draft documents on the development of World Health Organisation teaching standards, papers about efforts to cut child mortality and papers on the control of oil pollution from the International Maritime Organisation? The disclosure of information from those sources which could or could not have an economic or public health content in no way affects security, intelligence or defence. Surely it cannot be defended by Ministers that people who disclose such information should be hauled before a jury.

We have heard from Ministers and Conservative Members, sounding for all the world as though they had been before a jury: "Well, of course, being hauled before a jury is nothing. If one is innocent, the jury will find one innocent. It is nothing to be worried about." That has not happened to me, but I know what it is like to come before the full jury of the House of Commons, having had the experience of making one personal statement to the House. That can be nothing compared with appearing either in the box at the Old Bailey or at the Bar of the House, as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) did long before I came to the House. It should not be shrugged off with the aside, "With a jury you will be all right."

I wish to give two further examples before I resume my seat. The first concerns product defects. Whenever Ministers or the media ask what I am going on about and what information is being held back that we want, I would like to say, "Give me a list of what you have and I shall choose." They say, "Well that's not an effective argument." So virtually every time I say, "Let's take something simple. Let's take something that affects the man and woman in the street." This certainly affects the streets of London because they are congested with motor cars.

This Government and foreign Governments have in their charge information about accident rates of motor cars according to models and years. That information is never disclosed. It is not seen to be in the interests of the motor industry to have a league table of car models which have certain types of accidents, whether those cars are imported or made here. If that information were obtained

by British journalists from overseas sources, for example from the person in a foreign Government department who collated the information, which was then kept secret for the public good, and published the accident rates of foreign motor cars on British roads—we should bear in mind that we import 58 per cent. of our cars—it would be a criminal offence under this Bill.

Such journalists would be hauled before the courts with little defence. They would not be able to say that the Bill provides that such information should be released in the public interest. They cannot point to any part of the Bill that gives them that defence. I shall leave aside my example about hygiene regulations in food canning factories. That type of information would be caught under virtually every limb of clause 3. The British public have a right to know that information, but it will remain secret.

My final example, funnily enough, relates to a matter which I raised with the Attorney-General at Question Time a couple of weeks ago. The ownership of House of Fraser and Harrods is a matter of international relations. There is no question about that whatever. From whichever side one looks at the saga of House of Fraser, international relations are involved, as in clause 3. I should like the Minister to explain how information will be treated that has been published, mainly by one side of the argument —Lonrho and *The Observer*—on the takeover, involving, as it does, information from a state other than the United Kingdom.

Several states are involved, including both Haiti and Brunei. The Sultan of Brunei can certainly be satisfied that that information affects his international relations with the United Kingdom and consequently might jeopardise United Kingdom interests under clause 3(2)(a). It is clear that much of that information has been disclosed from overseas official sources.

Allegations have been made as a result of this case which concern international relations and the conduct of Conservative Ministers, particularly the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). There is a prima facie case that his conduct as Secretary of State fell well below what is acceptable in the conduct of public administration on merger policy. I should like to get to the bottom of this, and it is clear that one party to the merger takeover would also like to get to the bottom of it. By legitimately pursuing its interests, it will disclose all sorts of information from overseas state sources.

At present, no one has talked about a prosecution, but under this Bill that would be open to prosecution. More than that, it is more likely that many politicians more partisan than I may see that Conservative Ministers in a Conservative Government want to keep the lid on a scandal affecting members of the Conservative party, by using the draconian measures in this Bill. That will certainly be put to the House and the country.

The buying and selling of major British companies where overseas interests are involved will be affected. One cannot simply say that everything is commercially confidential, and we are not allowed to know anything about it. In this particular case, there are good grounds for believing that Conservative Ministers allowed House of Fraser to be purchased by a known crook. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"] I am not saying anything that I have not said before. The silence and acquiescence of the former Secretary of State enabled House of Fraser to be purchased by a known crook.

Clearly, clause 3 deals admirably with public, state, Government and party interests. As such, it should not be included in the Bill, and that is a good enough reason to vote against the Bill. We are a joke, a laughing stock, in most of the civilised world for the way we run such a secret Government.

Examples were given of America, Canada and New Zealand and, although no one mentioned Sweden, it is fair to add it to the list. They are all more open on more aspects of government than we are. On the issues which really count, the measures that they operate and the penalties for those who fall foul of the system are much more severe than anything that we operate. There is a message there: genuinely to target what counts and to hit offenders hard. That enables a democracy to operate much more trustingly between Government, Parliament and our masters, the people. This Bill mitigates against that, and as such should not receive a Second Reading.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Unless speeches are more restrained and shorter, some hon. Members will be disappointed by being unable to participate in the debate.

8 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I welcome your observations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those who were present at the beginning of the debate will recall that Mr. Speaker suggested that we might consider 10-minute speeches. I hope that my remarks will fit within that specification.

First, I give an unreserved welcome to the Bill. It is high time that section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911—a 77-year-old measure—was repealed. It is discredited. It is wrong that the brand of tea served in the Home Office canteen should be treated in the same way as Britain's defence secrets, with disclosure being a criminal offence. It is wrong in principle that the criminal law should be used to protect trivial secrets or information that merely happens to embarrass the Government. It is counter-productive. Section 2 is a catch-all provision, and it has fallen into disrepute.

I support the contention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that the Bill will advance liberty. It is right that we should consider tightly defined legislation, and the Bill will cover only six areas of information that it is in the interests of all the British people to keep secret. These are defence, security and intelligence, diplomacy, information given in confidence by other Governments, official information helpful to criminals and the interception of telecommunications. All these matters will continue to have legal protection.

The issue of information that is supplied by other Governments has been raised, and it is important that we should dwell upon it for a moment. It has been suggested that the test of harm following the disclosure of information received in confidence from overseas Governments, on foreign organisations, would not be subject to the same criteria of consideration before the courts as other disclosures. That is wrong. The Bill will require the prosecution to argue that harm was likely to arise in a particular instance either because of the breach of the confidence which the disclosure involved or the nature of the information or its contents.

[Mr. John Wheeler]

There will be no obligation upon the jury to accept the prosecution's argument and the defence will be free to argue that the disclosure was not likely to lead to harm. The onus will remain on the prosecution to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt. That is a formidable obligation, and it is right that it should be imposed upon the prosecution. It is one that the prosecution carries in all cases in this country. The prosecution will have to prove its case before a jury, and that, too, is right.

Currently, there is no public interest defence, and I do not wish to see such a proposition introduced into our law. It would generate confusion rather than certainty. It has been the position from time immemorial, generally speaking, that the criminal law defines an offence in terms of an individual's actions, not his motives for carrying them out. Motive may be taken into account by a judge when passing sentence, but it does not affect the determination of guilt or innocence. This principle should apply to the Bill.

The special duty of lifelong confidentiality will continue to apply to members of the security and intelligence services. Those who join these services do so voluntarily. There are arrangements for former officers to obtain permission to talk or write about their work, and that procedure is well understood. There are arrangements for an officer who is discontented with part of his work, or who has a problem within his department, to consult the new staff counsellor. Every officer knows from the outset, however, that there is an overriding obligation to keep silent about the work that he performs on behalf of the British people. The law provides that any disclosure by special service people is a criminal offence. That is not changed by the Bill, but the removal of so much Government information from the scope of the criminal law is bound to highlight the special position of those in the security services.

Apart from the categories which I have mentioned, no official information will be protected by the criminal law. That is the extent of the proposed liberalisation. It applies to the trivia which I have mentioned, such as the canteen menu and laundry lists, and to more important and sensitive information. It will no longer be a criminal offence to disclose Cabinet papers on controversial subjects such as health and education. The same applies to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget speech. To that extent, the Bill extends freedom of information, and that is most welcome.

There has been talk of prior publication and the position of newspapers, with much comment externally by those in the media. No one could be convicted of repeating information on security, intelligence, defence or international relations unless the prosecution could prove that the disclosure was likely to cause specified harm to the public interest and that the defendant knew it. It is a formidable test that the prosecution has to overcome.

Similarly, no one could be convicted for disclosing information that would be useful to criminals unless the prosecution could show that the information was still likely—this is important—to be useful despite its prior publication. The defence of prior publication is therefore subsumed within the test of harm. The arguments about prior publication and the public interest defence are answered by what I have said and by the proposals that are set out in the Bill.

8.9 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Secretary of State described the Bill as coherent and ambitious and, of course, it is neither. It is a cornerstone, however, of the Government's wider strategy, which is coherent and ambitious.

We have been told by Conservative Members, and especially by the Home Secretary, that the Bill is a fantastic leap forward in reform. Let me remind them that section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 has been a dead letter for over 20 years. Far from boasting about the removal from the statute book of legislation which was thoroughly discredited and almost entirely unenforceable, Ministers should be embarrassed that they have not even begun to take advantage of the opportunity with which they were presented to engage in real reform. If Ministers had cleared their minds of any thoughts of reform and of any notions of leaps forward, and had merely written on a small piece of paper the names of those who have embarrassed them in recent years—for example, Mr. Wright, Mr. Ponting and those involved in *The Daily Telegraph* case—and if the Government had sent civil servants scuttling off to cobble together a Bill that would ensure that all the people who had embarrassed the Government in the past would be caught by it and would serve time behind bars, this is the Bill that they would have come up with. Perish the thought that that was the motivation behind the Bill, but it is curious that all the people involved in the most embarrassing official secrets cases of recent years would have to do time as a result of this Bill. I am sure, however, that that is mere coincidence.

The point about the public interest defence is that the Government, their Ministers and almost all their loyal rank and file have shown themselves in recent years wholly unable to see that there might be a concept of public interest separate from the interest of the Government of the day. For the Government, the public interest is one and the same as the Government interest—the interest of the party in power and, particularly, of the leader of that party and her immediate circle.

In the closing years of this decade public interest has been reduced by the Government to the narrowest partisan version conceivable. These are the politics and political theories of the one-party state and I can well imagine how Conservative Members would point the finger if they emerged in the politics of other countries. Yet Ministers and seekers after office on the Conservative Back Benches parrot the political theories that underpin the one-party state.

We have heard much from Conservative Members about what can be expected from members of the security services—about how they join of their own free will, how they are not conscripts and how security and secrecy must be provided for. I remind them of what Mr. Justice Scott said, among other things, about the "Spycatcher" case. He had heard the Government's evidence and reflected on what Sir Robert Armstrong had said and on what poor Sir Robert had had to do in Australia. He had taken in at tremendous length—greater than Ministers had been able to explain this evening—the Government's thinking about

the desirability of protecting the security services. Mr. Justice Scott, who is not a member of the Socialist Workers party, said:

"I find myself unable to escape the reflection that the absolute protection of the security services that Sir Robert was contending for could not be achieved this side of the Iron Curtain."

It is precisely that absolute protection that this Bill proposes to enshrine in law.

It will not do for the Home Secretary to come before the House in his familiar garb of the great reformer. The Bill tries to enshrine thoroughly illiberal and anti-democratic ideas in law——

Mr. Allason *rose*——

Ms. Abbott: I do not have the hon. Gentleman's expertise in these matters, but I do have a few thoughts of my own that I want to expand.

Last week we debated the Security Services Bill. In the course of the debate, the problems that the security services have had in the past were made clear—the recurrent history of KGB infiltration at the highest levels, the lack of any notion of real accountability to the Government of the day in some parts of the service, and even the propensity on the part of some members of the security services to go mad in as little as four or five years, according to some past heads of MI5. So the House knows the institutional and structural problems of the security services. It knows that the Government have no proposals, now or ever, to make the security services the subject of genuine parliamentary oversight. So how can we go on this week to enshrine in legislation terms and conditions which remove one of the only possible guarantors against an over-mighty Security Service acting against the public interest?

Of course, if members of the security services want to do a Peter Wright they should be subject to administration and management procedures and to the law. But the procedures in the Bill are more reminiscent of those governing iron curtain security services. That does no credit to Ministers, the Government and, above all, to the Secretary of State, with all his pretensions of being a liberal reformer——

Mr. Allason: May we scotch the myth involved in these continual references to Peter Wright? They are completely out of context. Peter Wright is in Australia, out of the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom; and it would be open, even under this Bill, to any member of the Security Service to go abroad and escape jurisdiction and repeat the exercise. The Wright case is wholly irrelevant.

Ms. Abbott: Funnily enough, I agree that too many references to the Peter Wright case, which was an irresistibly humorous and comic case, tend to obscure the issues around the Bill and around that discussed last week. The hon. Gentleman has not answered my point—that the absolute protection for the security services for which the Government called in the Wright case was described by a member of the judiciary as unachievable this side of the iron curtain. I repeat that and challenge Ministers to counter what lay behind that statement.

The Secretary of State has boasted again that part of the reason why the Bill is such an amazing reforming measure is that vast areas of information will be freed from the criminal law. We are all supposed to gasp and thank him for his munificence. Of course, those areas of information have never been the subject of prosecution in living memory anyway. What is the point of the Secretary of State boasting when, in practice, section 2 has not been used?

I said earlier that the Bill was neither coherent nor ambitious. It shows every sign of having been drafted to cure past embarrassments and to ensure that they never happen again. The Government loathe giving out information as much as vampires abhor garlic. The Government have missed this opportunity to give any right to information to the citizen. But the Bill should be taken in the context of the increasingly cowed and restricted press and media. They have been cowed by the buying off of press barons and lordships, and by the constant denigration of public service broadcasting by ill informed Conservative Members. The press and media are increasingly hemmed in.

Alone among English-speaking democracies, we have a Security Service over which there is no parliamentary oversight. The Government and Prime Minister are increasingly authoritarian and intolerant of opposition, even from within their own ranks. That is the Bill's context, and it shows that the Bill is part of a coherent and ambitious design. It is a grand design which reduces the information available to the subject, thereby reducing the liberties of the subject and increasing the over-arching power of the Government and of the leaders of that Government. We believe, but we may be wrong and may be the innocent victims of conspiracy theories, that the Bill is part of an overall design. We reject that design and the Bill. The Bill is illiberal and by no means a reform. I shall be glad when the Home Secretary stops coming before the House in his gleaming white robes posing as a reformer, because in reality he is wearing the emperor's clothes.

8.20 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): If the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) would read the Franks report of 1971, she would discover that much of the basis of the Bill harks back to its recommendations. However, I shall not dwell on that.

I appreciate that there are many experts on official secrets and I do not claim in any way to be one of them, but having listened to some hon. Members I am not sure that the expertise is all that it is cracked up to be. I can, however, claim one unique feature. I have signed the declaration that I will keep confidentiality—in 1965 when I became a Metropolitan police officer.

We make many promises in life, but, sadly, some of them are broken. The promise of confidentiality is not to be broken lightly. If I say nothing else in the debate, I shall say that Peter Wright was despicable beyond description and that I have nothing but utter contempt for his dishonourable acts. It would be wrong to conclude that the Wright case has prompted this reform. Successive Governments have tried to address the question of reforming the catch-all provisions of the 77-year-old Official Secrets Act. The Government are right to claim that they are taking a liberal view. I shall shortly come to my reasons for saying that.

There is a genuinely held view that disclosure in the public interest is a valid argument and that the Bill falls short of a public interest defence. I do not agree. There are two important matters to be considered on the question of the public interest defence. The first is where the greater

[Mr. John Greenway]

public interest lies and the second is the burden of proof when cases are brought to court. The greater public interest is best served by discouraging through criminal sanctions a disclosure that may be damaging or is likely to be damaging. The Bill puts the onus of proof the right way round, so that Crown servants are discouraged from disclosing information for fear that damage or harm may occur, rather than encouraged to disclose it by a public interest defence.

As far as I am aware, only the Bill presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) contained a public interest defence. If I understand correctly what my hon. Friend had in mind, a Crown servant who leaks or discloses information would not have to prove conclusively that misconduct had occurred. Equally, suspicion would not be enough. Nevertheless conclusive proof of misconduct was not necessary. There may be other information of which the discloser does not know. The burden of proof in such a public interest defence would be on the prosecution which would have to establish, first, that no crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect of official duty or other misconduct had occurred and, secondly, that the discloser had acted unreasonably.

It might well be impossible to prove that misconduct had not taken place without releasing other important, confidential information which the public interest might require to be kept secret. The prosecution or the Crown would be on the horns of a dilemma. A Crown servant may have made an allegation of misconduct which on the face of it looks convincing. Public opinion, perhaps reacting to a front-page headline in one of the daily newspapers, would demand that the record be put straight. But to do that, the Crown might have to reveal information which ought to be kept secret. That is the real reason why it would not be valid to include in the Bill a public interest defence.

The alternative approach is the one in the Bill. The discloser can reveal information provided that he does not cause harm and there is no reasonable likelihood of damage. The burden of proof is on the prosecution to prove harm. Equally, the discloser knows that, however altruistic his motives, if he causes damage he will be guilty of an offence. Therefore, there is a general discouragement. The right balance must be to err on the side of caution. A public interest defence runs the risk of causing more damage to the national interest than the discloser may be seeking to protect. He may be acting only on a narrow appreciation or knowledge of the matters about which he makes his disclosures. An actual harm requirement, such as that in the Bill, reduces the risk of accidental disclosure. At the end of the day, it cannot be said to be in the public or national interest to disclose information which damages the national interest or is reckless as to whether such damage might occur.

The Opposition have asked whether the Government are right to claim this as a liberalising measure. The Opposition feel that the Bill does not go far enough. There is another point of view—to question whether some of these reforms go too far. The important point here is that under section 2 everything is caught. There are no definitions—they are not needed. The Bill specifies only those offences for which there can be a prosecution. Surely it must be right to ask whether we have included in the Bill all the offences that we ought to include. I am not about to suggest a long list of offences that we should have in the Bill, but it is right to adopt a questioning approach from the other point of view.

I should like to touch briefly on law and order. It would be reasonable in today's world to claim that the maintenance of law and order is as important a function of Government as defence. There is international terrorism and crime and mobility of criminals and terrorists, and threats are being posed to our normal civilised way of life. We see this almost every day. Is the Minister satisfied that all the evetualities required for the public interest are in the Bill? I should like his assurance that as the Bill progresses in Committee the Government will not be reluctant to introduce amendments.

Part of the answer to my question may lie in reference to other measures because we have to look at the Bill not just in relation to the Official Secrets Act but in relation to other statutes. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred to a written question put down in 1976 by his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) about the list of offences under other statutes. I was interested to find, for example, the Marketing of Eggs Act (Northern Ireland) 1957 on that list. There appears to be no reference to the marketing of eggs in England, Wales or Scotland, but no doubt that is covered by some other statute.

We need to consider how disclosure of historical information which might affect the reputation of an individual rather than future events is covered. What about unauthorised disclosure of criminal records or police files? Over the years, there have been a number of prosecutions of police officers and journalists—some successful and some not—when information had been leaked about police records. We need to ask whether the Bill covers the leaking of such information.

When the Government published the White Paper, they gave a general definition of criminal activity. The Bill is a considerable improvement because it specifies events. It is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which the specific offences could occur. A number of past prosecutions provide clear examples. In 1966, a police officer who passed on information about a proposed police search was fined after a magistrates court hearing. It seems as though such an occurrence would be covered by the Bill under the provisions applying to disclosure which impedes "the apprehension or prosecution of suspected offenders".

In 1968, a police officer passed on information about a mail van run, with a view to robbery—clearly an action likely to result in the commission of an offence. I could give many other such examples, but other hon. Members wish to speak.

There has been criticism of the Bill from one side. I hope that a Committee of the whole House will consider these important issues. Of course, we are unlikely in the foreseeable future to see a repeal of the legislation that we are about to enact. This is not a matter on which Parliament would wish to legislate too often. It is important that we get it right and ensure that those offences that should be covered by the Bill are indeed covered.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) has told us that there has been an appalling jumbo plane crash

in Scotland. I wondered whether I could formally ask the Government to consider making a statement, even a preliminary one, at 10.15 pm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that Ministers who are present have heard the hon. Member's comments. It would not be in order to interrupt this important debate.

8.32 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The depressing aspect of the argument is that Labour Members and some Conservative Members have been consistently winning the argument for a reform of the secrecy law. That happened in the Ponting, Tisdall, Massiter and Wright cases—all instances when the Government have been severely embarrassed. Flaws in the secrecy law have been pointed out.

We won the argument over ministerial certificates. They were seen to be an inappropriate way of dealing with the arguments. We won the argument and there was a modest step forward in the statutory basis for the Security Service, but it did not go far. The argument has been won also in relation to the problems of hierarchical organisations, the people trapped in them and the need for a counsellor within the service. Last year, in one of the high spots of my short career here, the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) effectively highlighted the need for reform. Unfortunately, the Government have not taken the right message from that. They believe that the way to approach official secrets is to shoot the messengers who tell them that things are going wrong and to ensure that there will be no more messengers. In the end, that will fail, just as every attempt to suppress the truth must eventually fail.

It is depressing that one of the surest tests of a maturing and growing democracy is whether the public are entrusted with more and more information while the Government go in the opposite direction. Who can say after looking at the collective outcome of Ponting, Tisdall, Zircon, Wright and Massiter that it was wrong for us to have heard about those events? No one could seriously argue that we were damaged by hearing about them. Our public life was enhanced by that knowledge, but the Government's central motive is to ensure that in future we shall not know about such events.

One aspect of the Bill disturbs me. Sworn to life-long confidentiality will affect not only full-time members of the security services but those temporarily associated with the world of secrets. I take the instance of John Stalker, a person to whom peculiar things were happening. I cannot judge the rights and wrongs of the Stalker case, because I do not know, just as no other hon. Member does, about the full events. In the end, Stalker left the police service and decided to write a book. What else would a man in such circumstances do but say, "That is what was happening to me in terms of my relationships with my police authority, the Home Office, the RUC, the Northern Ireland Office and the secret services"? John Stalker's book contains references to MI5. I shall take some virtually at random. He said:

> "I had authority from MI5, and the expressed support of the Home Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions."

He also said:

> "Present at the meeting were Sir John Hermon, the very senior MI5 legal officer and the MI5 Belfast representative. The meeting was opened by the senior MI5 man. He made it absolutely clear, as he had six months earlier, that his department was not standing in the way of a murder investigation. He said that MI5 was prepared to release all information to me."

That is an example of a person who, at that stage in his career, was involved with secrets and the work of the secret services and who seemed to be stitched up in terms of his investigation—having been given a job to do but then been prevented from doing it. Are we to remove from that person, who seems to have suffered an injustice, the right ever to tell his side of the story?

Mr. Allason: Is it not a fact that, if that gentleman believes that there has been an injustice, he will have an opportunity through the Security Service Bill to lay a complaint before the tribunal?

Mr. Worthington: A conspiracy seemed to surround Stalker everywhere. Something strange was going on that enveloped the entire Government service and the secret service, too. At the end of the day there is for some people no escape from that. They are trapped within that world and sometimes they must break free—not in any circumstances—from that entrapment.

The idea of life-long confidentiality is disturbing. As a general principle, I accept that people must exercise confidentiality in their jobs, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) demonstrated earlier, secrets come and go. What is secret at one time becomes very commonplace the next minute. There must always be some kind of filtering of what can be said by previous members of the secret service, or those people temporarily associated with it. However, to deny people the chance to put their side of history is profoundly illiberal.

One wonders whether this embargo on temporary members of the secret service will apply to Government Ministers. I do not consider that it can be right for history to be denied 20 or 30 years later the actuality of what occurred at a particular time. Many Prime Ministers and Ministers—even junior Ministers—at some stage later have found it important to tell the world their version of events. In many cases their positions have brought them into contact with what were state secrets. That they should for ever have an embargo on them speaking about that is profoundly wrong. Something should be done to ensure that they do not release current secrets, but to have life-long confidentiality as the over-arching theme is fundamentally wrong, and should be reconsidered.

I am worried about the world of investigative journalists. Certainly there are times when journalists reveal information that is extremely important. This year one of the most startling articles that I read was in *The Observer*, and it was about telephone tapping. The allegation was that 30,000 individual telephones were currently being tapped. The number of operatives involved in telephone tapping has doubled. In addition to the 60 tapping operatives, another team of 80 higher grade engineers maintain and service tapped lines. Mr. David Norman, who represents the telephone tappers as treasurer of the National Communications Union, said:

> "I can say with absolute certainty that I have been the victim of state surveillance in the form of telephone tapping for the best part of the last year."

That is the kind of information which should surface occasionally.

Mr. Allason: Why should it?

Mr. Worthington: It should surface because of the power given to the secret service to do fundamentally what they like. I am open to correction, but, as I understand the Bill, an article giving that kind of information would in future not be published, which is fundamentally wrong.

The police argue that the public interest defence is easy, but it is not. Hon. Members spoke earlier about the barriers to be overcome to establish that public interest defence. Have we learnt nothing from the events of recent years about what happens in various hierarchical institutions? One can take it from the world of psychology, and the work of Professor Milgram years ago on authority. He determined that people could be induced to do the most frightening things in the presence of authority. In cases of abuse within hospitals, child sex scandals and in every tragedy—whether it be Clapham Junction, or Kings Cross—where there is human error, there is information that would have stopped that horror occurring if it could have been released from that hierarchical organisation. One must face up to the fact that the secret services and the world of secrets must be the most hierarchical organisation of all. It is not enough to appoint councillors and to have good internal supervision of those services. Ultimately, there must be a public interest defence for people to escape from that.

It is not easy to establish a public interest defence, because it would have been necessary for the person to have gone to the councillor, to have real knowledge that an outrage was going on and to have explored every other avenue in that organisation before that public interest defence could be accepted.

It is crucial—a kind of bedrock of our kind of democracy—that there should be some escape from a hierarchical organisation that has control over one's career, one's family and over everything in one life. One should be able to escape from that situation and have some root of satisfaction in being able to plead a public interest defence, and that is taken away in this legislation.

8.46 pm

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): One thing that the entire House has agreed upon is that section 2 of the 1911 Act needs reforming. The present law is a mess and is drawn too widely. As the Franks committee observed on section 2:

> "A catch-all provision is saved from absurdity in operation only by the sparing exercise of the Attorney-General's discretion to prosecute."

The Government are to be congratulated on grasping this problem and bringing legislation before the House, but it is right that we should examine the substance of the Government's proposals. The only matter about which I agreed with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was when he said that we should consider the Bill on its merits, but he did his case no service when he then quoted a number of misleading examples. Referring to the special investigation powers, the right hon. Gentleman said that if those carrying out powers under a warrant were to blunder into his own house, which was next door to the house that should have been searched, if he were to pass on that information an offence would be committed. I must disagree with him because clearly, as I read the Bill, any action carried out that is not authorised by the warrant would not be covered.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook then criticised the Government for the test of harm. He and other Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott)—who referred to the Bill as bringing about the creation of a one-party state—said that the Government were actually setting down what amounted to harm, and that that was a dangerous precedent. Hon. Members who put that argument forward should read the Bill, because in five out of the six cases the Government may have a view as to what is harm, but it is for the jury to decide after considering the evidence in the case. It is poppycock to talk of a one-party state being created by the provisions.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to the Civil Service, and, having listened to all the debate, I have failed to understand why it should be necessary for someone in the Civil Service who feels that something is amiss to run off to a newspaper. A procedure has been set up whereby a person can invoke the Civil Service procedure if he has a valid complaint. To argue that civil servants should have a licence to reveal to newspapers something that they consider to be underhand is a bogus point.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) denounced the Bill in a robust speech. His speech, as always, was good value. I am sorry he is not in his place because I believe that his remarks on this Bill carry no credibility. He was a member of the previous Labour Government who, in 1978, published a White Paper—it was debated in July of that year—which did not address the question of freedom of information about which he was so concerned today. The Labour Government White Paper also stated that information relating to security and intelligence was to receive absolute protection. It appears that the right hon. Gentleman, who supported that White Paper, has gyrated through 180 deg. now that he has been relieved of the burdens of office. His remarks did not carry any weight tonight.

Contrary to some of the remarks that have been made, the Bill does contain a number of substantial changes that narrow further the scope of the present law as compared with the proposals published earlier this year in the Government's White Paper. I am especially pleased to note that it will not be an offence under the Bill simply to disclose information received in confidence from other Governments or from international organisations. The White Paper suggested that that would be an absolute offence, but I am delighted that the Bill makes it clear that harm would have to be proved. That is a welcome change.

The current proposals mean that the prosecution must satisfy specific tests of harm to the public interest in cases involving disclosure by most people, including journalists, in five of the six areas still covered by criminal law. It is only for members of and others closely connected with the security and intelligence services that any unauthorised disclosure would always be treated as harmful. The Government have got the Bill exactly right.

There is some controversy about whether there should be a statutory defence. A number of Opposition Members and some of my hon. Friends have said that they want absolute defences of prior publication and of disclosure in the public interest. When the House last debated this matter I had some sympathy for that view. If I read the Bill correctly, however, the existence of a harm test will mean that it will be open to a defendant in court to argue that he

had caused no harm beyond that created by the earlier publication. In those circumstances, it would be for the jury to decide. That is reasonable.

It is also fair to say that there is no statutory defence of public interest in the Bill. The harm test, however, will still apply. Surely a defendant will be able to argue in court that his disclosure was not harmful and that it was for the public good. If that is accepted by the jury he will, quite properly, be acquitted.

I have a couple of questions that I wish to put to the Minister about the Bill as it affects matters concerned with crime. What about the discloser of information as opposed to the publisher? In some cases the person who discloses information will clearly be an accessory to the offence. Could that person be prosecuted as such? I hope that, in appropriate cases, he could. Also, will the Minister confirm that military offences—for example, desertion and other such offences—will not be covered by the Bill? I trust that they will still be dealt with under separate law.

Having read the criticisms of the Bill that have appeared in the press, I am led to the conclusion that journalists have obviously not read or fully digested the Government's proposals. I believe that when seeking to take a journalist to court, the prosecution—the Crown—would have a near Herculean task persuading the jury that the journalist had committed an offence. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) has already touched on that.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to my hon. Friend the Minister's letter, which I understand was published in a newspaper, but I am afraid that I have not seen that letter.

Mr. Corbett: It was not published.

Mr. Knight: Well, whatever happened to the letter, the right hon. Gentleman referred to eight hurdles that the prosecution must clear. From my understanding of the Bill, I believe that there are nine hurdles to be cleared to ensure the prosecution of a journalist. It is not right for some members of the press to say that this is a repressive measure.

Mr. John Patten: Let me clear up the matter of the letter. Is my hon. Friend aware that I did not write a letter to the press, as suggested by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook? Rather, I gave an interview to *The Times* in which I set out the hurdles that the prosecution would have to clear to prosecute a journalist successfully. That was the source and it was entirely accurate. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury was spot-on when he directed the attention of the House to it.

Mr. Knight: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that clarification and I am glad that he has confirmed that nine points have to be proved by the Crown to pursue a journalist for a breach of the provisions. If that is the case, members of the press should be praising my right hon. Friend as the most liberal Home Secretary since 1911.

This is an excellent Bill. It is a well-balanced measure and I hope that the whole House will support it today.

8.56 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I believe that the question asked by the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) about the position of the discloser is extremely important to all of us in the House.

I shall speak quietly to the Home Secretary and Minister in the hope that the questions that I put will be answered, possibly by a letter—not to me, but placed in the Library before we start discussing this Bill in Committee. Frankly, having spent 11 days at the Old Bailey during the trial of Mr. Clive Ponting, I realise that this is a very difficult, delicate, grey area.

One: is it unfair to say that this Bill could be subtitled the "Anti-Ponting Jury Bill"? It looks to me as though Ministers dislike the 1911 Act because it does not guarantee that those who reveal information can be prosecuted when convenient and found guilty. If that is unfair, may I be told by letter why?

Two: I have a personal request of the Home Secretary. It ill becomes him to use terms of abuse. That is not his style. Who were the obfuscators? I genuinely do not know. We may be wrong, but we should not be treated with that kind of abuse if we are to have a sensible Committee stage. Such abuse is not in the Home Secretary's nature. If I am a melancholic obfuscator, I want to be told why.

Three: is it fair to say that the Bill is designed to prevent the newspapers, radio and television from putting over stories and facts which the Government do not want made public, to make certain beyond peradventure that those prosecuted are found guilty in future? We must know whether this is a measure to deal with perverse juries in trials like Ponting's. That is how it looks to a number of serious people. I note that the Home Secretary is knitting his brow in a pained way. I simply want to know why the Home Secretary thinks I am wrong about that.

Four: having read the Bill, it seems to some of us that it is constructed for one purpose above all others—to put a stopper in the loopholes revealed by recent cases which have been awkward for the Government. My hon. Friends the Members for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) have already outlined the cases and to save time I need not repeat their excellent speeches. However, my point must be answered in a letter to all of us who have taken part in this debate.

Five: I realise that it may be difficult to refer to previous cases, as there may be retrospective hypothetical situations, but it is fair to ask the following question. Under this Bill, I am sure that Sarah Tisdall would still be found guilty, but are we right to think that *The Guardian* would be found guilty as well? Could *The Guardian* have been prosecuted for printing the documents? From our reading of the Bill, it seems that it could. I would like that confirmed.

Six: under the Bill, are we right to assume that Cathy Massiter could be prosecuted with a greater chance of success? Not only would it be illegal to report her allegations. If a newspaper or the BBC reported Massiter-like allegations, Ministers would presumably be cocking a proverbial snook at their critics, for would they not say then that illegal actions undertaken by MI5 are legalised under the new security legislation? If I do the Government an injustice, let us be told.

Seven: I asked a former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), a question about someone acting as Desmond Morton acted for Churchill. The former Prime Minister said that the Home Secretary would have to answer. The Home Secretary shook his head, and I believed that he thought that anyone in Desmond Morton's position would not be

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

prosecuted. May we have some reflections on that? I believe that some people think that someone like Desmond Morton would find himself in prison.

Eight—in all these points I hope that Ministers will correct me in a letter if I am wrong—could Ms. Massiter be prosecuted under one of the new-fangled provisions in the new legislation for putting out "false information" about MI5?

Nine: under the Bill, if another Peter Wright were to publish in Australia, would it be illegal to report anything Wright wrote for the benefit of the public in the United Kingdom, even though the rest of the world could read about it as they pleased? That question was implied by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington. It would be useful to have the Government's reflections about that before the Committee stage.

Ten: under this Bill, would it be illegal for Duncan Campbell and the BBC to make a Zircon film or for the *New Statesman* or any other journal to write an article about Zircon? If so, we could cut out the need for highly publicised and damaging special branch raids on the BBC at Queen Margaret drive in search of Campbell's sources. If I have got it wrong, let us be told.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): My hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Dalyell: I think that I have got it right, because I have taken legal advice about it.

Eleven: as to national and sectional interests, will the Home Secretary explain what he was trying to say on that subject in his opening speech? His remarks were a little obscure. It may be that I was being thick about it, but I do not think that that can be said of all my right hon. and hon. Friends. It was not clear what distinction the right hon. Gentleman was drawing.

Twelve: are we being unfair in suggesting that the Home Secretary's distinction between the front pages of national newspapers and articles in technical journals borders on the absurd? The Russians will take into account—but the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) shakes his head.

Mr. Whitney: The point is not necessarily whether the Russians know a fact, but whether it suits the Russians or some other party to surface a fact and have it more widely distributed for other reasons. If I may say so, with respect to the hon. Gentleman, he thinks in simplistic, Len Deighton-type terms. The world has moved on and is a more subtle place. Prior publication is a more dangerous area than the hon. Gentleman seems to understand.

Mr. Dalyell: So that I may understand before Committee stage, let there be a letter on the matter, not just for myself but placed in the Library, so that all right hon. and hon. Members interested in the Committee stage will know the Government's reflections on the hon. Gentleman's point.

Thirteen: having spent 11 days at the Old Bailey during Clive Ponting's trial, I cannot understand how, under this Bill, Bruce Laughland or anyone else could mount a defence at the trial. Would the evidence of a Government cover-up introduced at that trial be allowed under the provisions of the Bill? I think not. I understand also that, under clause 3 of the Bill, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and Professor Wade, Master of Caius, would not be permitted to testify. That is what Ponting himself has written in today's press, and I know that he has grounds for doing so. If that belief is wrong, let the House be told.

Fourteen: at first sight, the Bill has been devised to stop leaks. Do the Government imagine that they will in any way be successful in that attempt? It seems that, in practice, the Bill will make leakers rather more sophisticated, as they have been recently. People are becoming better at it. In this context, I hope that I shall not be ruled out of order if I say that people such as Mr. Mogg put their accounts of delicate events and other matters in bank vaults, as has Colette Bowe. Heaven knows why civil servants should put their accounts of events in bank vaults if they tally with those of Ministers.

Fifteen: there is also the question of leaks to Members of Parliament. What will be the position if a right hon. or hon. Member, or anybody else, discloses information? The hon. Member for Wycombe made certain remarks. I shall not argue the point, but I do not see what else I should have done in the case in question other than go to the Chairman of the Select Committee. I did not go to the press. I believe that I behaved perfectly responsibly in keeping within parliamentary procedure. We can return to that point in Committee. I will only say that part of the trouble was misbehaviour by others.

On the third day of the Ponting trial, what did we hear other than the clever Richard Mottram, private secretary to the Secretary of State for Defence, reveal that the report of the commander-in-chief, Sir John Fieldhouse, was altered behind his back. That seems a good example of misbehaviour—altering the commander-in-chief's report behind his back.

If the Government bring a case under the new legislation, they had better pick their first case carefully because it could easily end in a fiasco.

Finally, I shall quote the words of Bruce Laughland from the end of his submission at the Ponting trial, which are very moving:

"If what he"—

that is, Clive Ponting—

"did was a crime for which he renders himself liable to punishment, you know it could be a licence for Ministers to withhold from Parliament information with the tame acquiescence of their Civil Servants and so infringe our liberties. And if what he did was a crime in English law, you say so. But if it is, God help us, because no government will."

9.11 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I detect a curious feature in the way in which the Government are approaching legislation. It seems that we are almost legislating to appear before the European Court on a whole range of issues, of which this is one. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 has brought us before the Court. The letter that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary sent to the BBC governors and to the IBA will bring us there, and last week we introduced the Security Service Bill. I have no doubt that that will ultimately lead us there as well. As a party, we should be cautious in legislation that ensures that we are reviewed directly in front of the European Court. It seems that we no longer attest to the common rules and principles of our democracy that have informed it for the past 200 years. The Government should be mindful of that.

Why do I say that this Bill will bring us in front of the European Court? The most obvious reason is the absolute offence that the Bill establishes. An absolute offence means that a man or woman in public service, who has been or is at present in the narrow area of the security services, may never say anything. If they do say something, they will have committed an offence and all that the prosecution will have to demonstrate is that they have said something in contravention of an onerous law that insists, by virtue of the fact that they have said something relating to their former or present service, that they have committed an offence.

Mr. Allason *rose*——

Mr. Shepherd: One should consider crime, fraud and high iniquity, which have been tested and weighed in the courts—the High Court, the Court of Appeal or the House of Lords. All those courts have said that one cannot enjoin on a citizen an absolute duty of confidence in the face of iniquity. Yet the Government throw that out of the window, knowing that they will ultimately come in front of the European Court on this issue if they persist with the Bill. They do not see a way to remedy that or to give justice to the citizens of this country.

The public interest defence is one way to remedy that, and it is not as it has been caricatured by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the White Paper. It can be narrowly defined—that a civil servant has to adduce evidence of crime or fraud and it can be brought into play only after the Civil Service has exhausted all internal remedies. If civil servants go directly to the public, they will deny themselves that defence.

Mr. Allason *rose*——

Mr. Shepherd: I regret that I shall not give way. I am already running into ministerial time.

The other point that causes me concern is clause 3 and its definition of international relations and organisations. I have exchanged correspondence with the Home Secretary on that, and we have been going round in circles. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) made an important speech on a range of issues, which I am unable to cover because of lack of time.

The qualifying basis on which a prosecution may be secured is that little phrase that has been slipped in, which states that damage may have taken place

"by reason of the fact that it is confidential".

That is the test that we now must meet. I know of almost no public document that does not have confidentiality in it.

Let me refer to the example given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), a former Home Secretary. He thought that the clause referring to international organisations should be dropped. The Government now seem to be legislating by Home Office press release. The extraordinary extravagance of the language of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on this matter has confused the issue.

Let us take two international organisations as examples —OPEC and the International Tin Council. They are producers or cartels against the public interest as we would define it. They are trying to maintain the price of their commodities against all our interests. They will be regarded as "international organisations" and information revealed about them will give rise to a crime under the Bill. At present, there is no crime in that area in our statute book. It is an inhibiting factor.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary may yet again nod his head, but the fact is that the Foreign Office is quite incapable of identifying what constitutes an international organisation. We have been around this before. The Foreign Office cannot even tell us the international organisations with which it has done business this year. On the basis of the fact that clause 3 defines international relations as follows:

"'international relations' means the relations between States, between international organisations",

OPEC is an international organisation, as is the International Tin Council.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that he wanted the Bill to be effective, enforceable and reasonable. I do not think that, as drafted, the Bill is reasonable. It does not meet that criterion. Because I have doubts about my right hon. Friend's arguments, I wonder whether the meaning of "confidential" should be clarified by amendment. If "international organisations" covers the Ghana Cocoa Marketing Company (UK) Ltd., the International Tin Council, OPEC and all the Common Market subsidiary organisations, it is an onerous and wrong principle.

I am nervous about saying that the difficulty that I have in voting for the Bill and my reason for therefore voting against it is that, all the way through the process from January to the White Paper and to this debate, the Government have consistently yielded very little on the principles. The underlying principle is the citizen's right to be able to hold Government accountable. We lose sight of that so often.

The Executive's perception of the way in which the world ought to be is, "If we can close unto ourselves and hold unto ourselves the information, all the inconveniences of having to manage this House of Commons go out of the way." It is not in the interests of the House of Commons to pass the Bill as drafted.

9.16 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), and it is a shame that the Government did not allow two days for this debate. I hope that the Home Secretary and others heard the remarks by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) about ensuring adequate time when we come to Committee.

I should like first to congratulate the Minister on his reply. I expect that we shall have the usual knockabout accusing the Opposition for opposing the Bill. Perhaps, given the time of the year, it will be in pantomime costume. I hope that the Minister enjoys himself. I make no apology for the Opposition, who are guilty only of thinking about the Bill and that has led us to the conclusion that we should oppose it.

It was the Prime Minister who, in 1960 as a newly elected Member, set the proper background against which we should judge the Bill. When introducing a private Member's Bill to expand the right of the public to attend council meetings, she said:

"the paramount function of this distinguished House is to safeguard civil liberties rather than to think that administrative convenience should take first place."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1357-58.]

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

Those were wise words, but not for the first time they have been long since forgotten by the right hon. Lady and her Government.

At heart this Bill is all about the convenience of the Government, and has nothing to do with civil liberties or freedom of information. That is why it is an unwelcome and unwanted Christmas present. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members have shown, the Bill fails on every major count. It will not increase public access to information. It will provide tighter controls over information which the Government decide they want to keep secret, and over people, not just inside Government but outside Government service, who have access to such information —even unto the grave. Even if information comes to a journalist or anyone else, second, third or even tenth hand, if its disclosure was unauthorised, it will be an offence to receive it or to pass it on.

In many areas of the Bill, there is no test of specific harm. People can and will be convicted and imprisoned without there being any evidence that actual harm has been done to the national interest. Newspapers will have to decide, when they pick up a story about the intelligence or security services, whether all the potential harm attached to that report has already been done. There is no way in which they can know. Any newspaper's lawyers will advise, "Do not publish." In a free society, we take the view that the motto should be, "Publish and be damned" when there is no evidence of harm to our security.

In our debate in July, the Home Secretary said:

"Our central objective is to narrow the law so that it applies only to disclosure without authority of official information which"—

these are the words that matter most—

"is likely to give rise to an unacceptable degree of harm to the public interest."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 1413.]

If that is what the Bill set out to do, we would support it, but it does not. Those words are another example of the Government's doublespeak. The Home Secretary used the expression, "unacceptable degree of harm". Why is there no proper test of actual harm in most of the Bill? The Home Secretary mentioned the public interest. Why do the words "public interest" appear nowhere in the Bill? His words were designed to mislead. Yet again today he said one thing while the Bill says another.

When the Home Secretary spoke of unacceptable harm, he was near to the Franks report definition of a serious injury to the security of the nation or the safety of the people. The concept of unacceptable harm to the public interest is something with which we agree. It presupposes that there are different degrees of harm—that at one end disclosure is acceptable because no real damage is done, and that at the other it is unacceptable because damage is done to the nation's security. If the Home Secretary believes that—the words are his—why has he not put them in the Bill? Has he changed his mind since July, or has he had it changed for him?

On 22 July, the Home Secretary boasted:

"No Government have made so much official information available to the public or Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 1418.]

He cited the prison system, press visits to Scottish prisons, reports made by the schools inspectors and even press visits to parts of Porton Down and Aldermaston. That is the trouble: his very boasting misses the point. The real question for the House is why these matters were ever made secret in the first place. The Home Secretary's boasting reveals an attitude—that freedom of information is based on the Government's claim to decide on and know what the people they are supposed to serve are able to know. That is to turn the argument on its head. In a democracy, there should be a general right to know everything except that which touches on the safety and security of a nation.

Still boasting, the Home Secretary described what was happening as, "an earthquake in Whitehall". He must know that it did not even rattle a teacup, let alone shake the doors to rooms full of information which should never have been locked away. One of the most wicked aspects of what is proposed is that entirely innocent people can, as in the past, have their lives ruined by the wrongdoings of the intelligence services. There is nothing that they can do about it. An M15 officer, M14 officer or other Government officials——

Mr. John Patten: That was last week's Bill.

Mr. Corbett: If the Minister will listen, he will see that they are related. Those people will commit a criminal offence if they reveal misbehaviour on the part of the intelligence or security services. It will be a crime for any newspaper, television programme, book or magazine—or indeed anyone uttering such statements—to disclose misbehaviour or wrongdoing. There are four cases of such behaviour on record. Under the Bill, they would never see the light of day.

Case one involves a former distinguished Labour Minister—Niall MacDermot—who was denied high office because of a false allegation, made by the security services, that he had married a Soviet agent. False allegations were leaked to colleagues here and to selected journalists. Details of that malpractice came to light only through the publication of a book by David Leigh called "The Wilson Plot" which, under the Bill, would be banned.

The second case involved Jack Jones, a distinguished former general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union who was falsely and ridiculously accused of being a Soviet agent—*[Laughter.]* It is remarkable that anybody can find this funny. Misleading MI5 files were used to advise Ministers to prevent him from being brought into Government between 1965 and 1968. We know that only through "The Wilson Plot" book, publication of which—I remind the House—would be banned under the Bill.

The third case involves Miss Isabel Hilton who was falsely accused of being subversive after reading Chinese at university and joining the Scotland-China Association. Against that background she was denied a job at the BBC. Miss Hilton found out about that only after a report in *The Observer*—*[Laughter.]* I repeat to Conservative Members, who find that funny, that under the Bill that report could not be published in *The Observer*.

The fourth case involves my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), on whom a file was opened because of her work with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. That is a proper, legal organisation, as the former Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), reminded us. The pretext was that she was a contact for

Soviet journalists. That came to light only because Miss Cathy Massiter, a former MI5 officer, spoke out on the "20/20 Vision" television programme. Under the Bill she would have committed a criminal offence and the programme makers would be similarly treated.

Clause 15 makes it an offence for any British citizen or Crown servant to disclose information about the security or intelligence services when abroad. It follows logically from other provisions and will doubtless afford successive Cabinet Secretaries expensive trips to the far corners of the globe where ex-spies seem to settle.

What about satellite television? What happens if Mr. Rupert Murdoch's channel broadcasts out of Luxembourg a news item that involves security or intelligence in the United Kingdom? Mr. Murdoch is an American citizen and, I assume, outside the scope of the Bill—or is he? Are the Government contemplating starting extradition proceedings in the New York courts to bring him back here to be tried for unauthorised disclosure in the United Kingdom? What about the thousands, perhaps millions, who see such news via a satellite broadcast? Under the Bill, they will be caught, not for watching it but for telling their neighbour or someone at work about what they have seen and heard. The same would be true if they videod such a transmission. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ridiculous."] It is not ridiculous. Read the Bill. If a British citizen is not involved in such a satellite broadcast nothing can be done, except to British citizens who see and hear the broadcast because they have received unauthorised information and mentioned it to a relation, friend or neighbour. The world can know of a deed that did not even cause harm to the interests of the nation, but we who live here are not, under the Bill, allowed to know it. How is that for open Government? The lawyers will thank the Government from the bottom of their bank balances for such a gift.

How does the Bill stand in relation to article 10 of the European convention on human rights which, as the Minister knows, guarantees

"freedom to . . . receive and impart information . . . without interference by public authority."

Has the Minister examined the Bill in light of that convention or will the Bill be yet another case—there have been more than 30 so far—where Britain has to be dragged before the European Court before our liberties can be safeguarded? Even the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks protested, when we discussed the White Paper, at the wider catch-all scope of proposals relating to defence. He said:

"It would be easier to prove that the material that is disclosed prejudices something than that it does serious harm . . . I do not see any justification for what amounts to a tightening up of proposals that were originally put forward in 1979."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 1430.]

On the use of criminal law in that area, the Franks report said in paragraph 118:

"This means that the criminal law would not apply to information the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause some injury to the interests of the nation, but short of serious injury."

I made that point earlier.

Paragraph 119 sets out what the Franks committee said should be

"a proper basis for the employment of criminal sanctions the unauthorised disclosure of official information which would be likely to cause serious injury to the security of the nation or the safety of the people. If criminal sanctions are justified at all, they are justified for this purpose. If they are to be reserved for what is most important, they should not go any wider."

The Bill ignores those important words and stretches the criminal law more widely. It replaces the large net with the large mesh, which was provided by the 1911 Act, with a smaller net with a smaller mesh, the better to catch and silence those who, at the end of the day, mainly cause this Government embarrassment.

There is a supreme irony about having this debate today. It is 21 December, the darkest day of the year. The Government have chosen darkness and rejected the chance to let the light into vast areas of Government, which could only benefit from that. Proper steps to protect our national interests from espionage and subversion are one thing, and would find universal support; casting a wide net over information outside those areas is another and it shows that, at basic level, this is simply a Government who do not trust the people. They cry freedom and they act like tyrants.

I tell the Government that there is a consensus on the Bill—something for which the Prime Minister has repeatedly asked—but that that consensus does not belong to the Government; it belongs to the Opposition and to some distinguished right hon. and hon. Members on the Conservative Benches. Ours is a consensus for freedom, openness, honesty and accountability because—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) jests about these matters when they lie at the heart of our democracy. Ours is a consensus for freedom, openness, honesty and accountability, which are all precious ingredients, precious parts of our democracy. Part of our anger about this Bill is that it is precisely those things that the Government reject. This Bill demeans even the Government in the eyes of all those who truly care about our safety, security and democracy. That is why we shall vote against it tonight.

9.33 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on his speech. He was poetic, almost Shakespearian, as befits one coming from middle England. We shall see how many divisions there are in his consensus when we vote tonight. That will be the test.

We have had a long and thorough debate. When I replied to the debate on the White Paper in the summer, I said that we would listen to what hon. Members said. My right hon. Friend's Bill demonstrates that we have listened to the points made and have made changes that are reflected in the Bill. That is why I am convinced that so many of my right hon. and hon. Friends support the Bill.

An impressive list of six thoughtful and independent-minded hon. Members have spoken strongly in support of the Bill. I refer to my hon. Friends the Members for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), for Banbury (Mr. Baldry)—*[Interruption.]* The frivolous mood that so captured Opposition Front Bench Members during the tea period seems to have continued during the after-dinner period. I refer also to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), who made a remarkable speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who criticised us for perhaps going too far—clearly we shall have to mark his points carefully in Committee—and my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight), who made a notable contribution.

[Mr. John Patten]

I am sorry that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) were not able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, because of the limited time. I was glad to be in the Chamber to listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington)—he is not present at the moment—if only to demonstrate my expertise in pronouncing his unpronounceable constituency. Also, I do not see in the Chamber the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who asked my right hon. Friend 15 specific questions and asked for a letter to be placed in the Library. We shall look at the record of what the hon. Member for Linlithgow had to say.

Three right hon. and hon. Conservative Members have doubts or have expressed outright opposition to the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) is the only Conservative Member who has spoken in outright opposition to the Bill. We respect his views, although we disagree. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who for a proper reason cannot be present tonight—he has written to say why he cannot be here—asked a specific question about the parliamentary handling of the Bill. As the provisions of the Bill go to the heart of government, we take the view that the Bill should be considered by a Committee of the whole House. Therefore, after Second Reading we shall move that the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House. I shall certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Government Chief Whip the important points that were raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup about proper consideration of the Bill.

I do not know which way my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup would have voted if he were here tonight, but I know that the vote of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) is in the balance and, to a certain extent, hangs on whether I am able to satisfy him by giving the reassurances that he specifically sought from me. I shall attempt to answer his questions and, I hope, reassure him.

My right hon. Friend is particularly concerned about the position of a serving member or former member of the security and intelligence services who wishes to publish his or her memoirs or reflections on his or her life and times in the security services. I should like to give my right hon. Friend and the House a little more detail of the authorisation procedures involved, some of which may be new and novel to the House of Commons. I can give my right hon. Friend the necessary reassurances that he sought. I listened carefully, as he enjoined me to do, to everything that he said.

All members of the services know that they should not write about their experiences in any way that might harm the work of the services or damage the national interest. I am sure that no hon. Member would dispute that. However, if a member or former member of the services wished to write material relating to his or her work, he would first talk to a senior officer about his plans for publication. All serving officers know to whom they should turn to talk about such matters, and all retired staff also have a point of contact with the relevant service. So if a member or former member prepares material which may have some connection with his or her work he or she will be required to send the book or article to the relevant service. That is made clear to all members of the services on appointment.

No member of the services is unclear where he or she should turn if he or she wishes to seek clearance. The draft of the book or article will then be considered carefully by the service to identify points of sensitivity. As my right hon. Friend, with his distinguished record, will appreciate all too well, that can be done only by staff who have a detailed knowledge of the consequences of the publication of material affecting particular areas. They will then submit their reasoned analysis to the senior members of the services. So the sole criterion for authorising publication is whether publication of a particular piece of information will jeopardise national security directly or indirectly. It is a judgment about considerations which are relevant today, not about past history or former embarrassments.

If a point of difficulty were to be identified it might still be possible through discussion to agree with the author a change in the text to overcome the problem. My right hon. Friend has gone through this procedure when publishing his own works.

Mr. Allason: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: If I could continue to explain in full the points that I want to make to my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion, I will then give way. I want to set out the procedure so that the House can understand each step. If the problem is larger than just a few minor textual changes or if agreement cannot be reached, sometimes authorisation will not be given. My right hon. Friend will understand that authorisation cannot be given on every occasion, but I can assure him that this decision would never be taken by one person alone, but by senior members.

My right hon. Friend then asked where a member of the service would turn if he still felt dissatisfied. He will turn to the staff counsellor. At present our distinguished staff counsellor is Sir Philip Woodfield. That is a matter of public knowledge. This applies not just to present members but to former members of the services. If a member or former member is seeking to use publication to report anxieties that he or she may have about his or her work or former work, or if he or she is concerned about the reasons for a refusal of publication, he or she can go to the staff counsellor who can, if necessary, put him or her in touch with the relevant Secretary of State or my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Following those reassurances, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion will be persuaded to join us in the Division Lobby tonight.

Mr. Allason: This is a serious area of difficulty and one that is recognised by hon. Members on both sides. We accept that there is some sort of mechanism for authorising publication, but should the sole arbiter of these matters be the former Department of a particular employee? Would it not be better to have a publication review board similar to the one that works so well in America?

Mr. Patten: It would be extremely difficult sometimes for a publication review board to go into areas which were still of operational importance to the security of the nation, its economy or the welfare of its citizens. The

system that I have outlined, parts of which have been outlined to the House for the first time tonight, gives the sort of cast-iron assurances that someone who wishes to publish has redress—*[Laughter.]* As usual, there is raucous laughter from the Labour Front Bench. That is about all that has characterised their behaviour in today's debate.

I listened carefully to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)——

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I ask the hon. Gentleman to forgive me for not giving way to him. I am anxious to answer the specific question that was included in his speech before I reach the end of my remarks.

As I have said, I listened carefully to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, as I always do. He composes his speeches extremely well and, therefore, I listened intently when he said that he felt that the object of replacing the discredited and absurd section 2—I think that that is how he described it, but his words will appear in *Hansard* tomorrow—was to make an improvement. I welcome the fact that he feels that the result will be an improvement. I think that that sentiment was expressed also by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). Having said that, however, both the right hon. Gentleman and the right hon. and learned Gentleman proceeded strongly to criticise the Bill.

It is to be welcomed also that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook recognised—some of us had doubts whether he did—that it is necessary to have sanctions for harmful disclosure. That, at least, is an advance. The need for sanctions was recognised also by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

The debate rolled on and then we began to understand what Labour Members really thought about the Bill. The veil was lifted as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook continued to speak. Their thinking was beautifully summed up in a remark made a few moments ago by the hon. Member for Erdington, who spoke of his attitude to official secrets in a free society as "publish and be damned".

Mr. Corbett: I did not say that. Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: Of course.

Mr. Corbett: Let us get this right. Will the Minister accept that I said, "The motto should be 'publish and be damned' where there is no evidence of harm to real security"?

Mr. Patten: That is the entire message of the Bill. That is exactly what the Bill sets out to do. It has tests of harm throughout each of the clauses.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Withdraw.

Mr. Patten: I see no need to withdraw and I do not intend to do so.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook got into a terrible muddle over harmful disclosures of foreign confidences. I shall give a couple of examples in an attempt to clear up the muddle in which he so obviously found himself. First, we take extremely seriously our international obligations to organisations such as NATO. If, for example, we receive from NATO confidential information about defence strategy, and we fail to protect it, the confidence of our NATO partners would be damaged and our standing in that organisation would be reduced. As a consequence, our ability to pursue the defence interests of the United Kingdom within NATO would be jeopardised. I will give the right hon. Gentleman a second example. I hope that he is supportive of the work of Trevi, as I think that all members of political parties in western Europe are. If a state that co-operates with us within the Trevi arrangements provided information about the activities of international terrorist organisations, for example, operating in that country and in the United Kingdom and we failed to protect that information, which would be an extremely serious matter, we could not expect that state again to supply us with information. That would obviously jeopardise this country's interests by impairing the effectiveness of the Trevi arrangements through which we combat international terrorism with considerable success. I look to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to give the support of the Labour party on these critical issues.

The two central issues of principle in the debate have been whether there should be a public interest defence and a defence of prior publication. Those who have spoken in support of a public interest defence have served only to illustrate what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said in his splendid opening speech. Those who advocate such a defence are seeking to remedy not the criminal law but the resort of the civil law. Clearly, there is confusion in the minds of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his right hon. and hon. Friends.

The Government do not accept that the criminal law is the right place to balance one Crown servant's perception of the public interest against the specific and serious damage that his disclosure has caused. Incidentally, the definition of a Crown servant, which deeply interested the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), is set out in full in clause 12. If that perception and damage were balanced under the criminal law, that would alter the role of Crown servants in this country and their relationship with the Government of the day. A Crown servant or civil servant would become a free agent, responsible for his independent decisions only to the court. That is not the way to maintain an effective and impartial Civil Service, which I still believe is one of the great glories of the British constitution. An effective criminal law must be clear and predictable in its operation and that is its basis in this country.

If the House believes that this cannot or should not be done because it wants to leave a gaping loophole through which a Crown servant can leak information to a journalist or anyone else, it will be deciding one of two things—either that this is an area into which the criminal law should not enter and which should be left entirely to the civil law, or that it wants such a muddle and fuzz that the criminal law will be a dead letter the day the Bill is enacted.

The Government recognise, as does my right hon. Friend, who has done so much to promote openness in Government since he became Home Secretary—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is envious because he does not get compliments like that. The Government recognise that there is a place for a Crown servant with a worried conscience to go, but that place is not the front page of a newspaper or a surreptitious dispatch in a brown envelope. That is why we have a clear

[Mr. Patten]

system of access to the head of the Civil Service and, in the case of members of the intelligence and security services, to the staff counsellor.

Some hon. Members have discussed the public interest and the damage done to it as though there were an agreed and precise formulation which a jury had only to balance, but that is not so. We are discussing the criminal law, not the civil law. We cannot agree that the criminal law should admit a defence which claims that only a little harm was done to salve someone's conscience. That is like arguing that only a small murder had been committed to rid the globe of a scoundrel. Such an argument is incompatible with the criminal law.

The prior publication defence is another central point of principle for which we have heard some eloquent pleas, but we have heard no coherent argument why people who disclose information knowing that it will do serious harm to the public interest should not be prosecuted like other people. Yet that is what the prior publication defence, as it has been presented today, amounts to. It is puzzling that those who support our decision to leave it to a jury to decide whether a particular disclosure is harmful also press us to take away such a decision from a jury when there has been prior publication. That sounds suspiciously like special pleading on behalf of the media——

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I referred to his speech earlier when he was not in the Chamber.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe was spot-on in dealing with this issue, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East in the course of his notable contribution.

I want now to fulfil my pledge to respond to the question asked by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland about the Justice report. This also allows me to answer the point about the European convention made by the hon. Member for Erdington. I say unequivocally to both hon. Members that there is no evidence and no reason to believe that the Bill as drafted will in any way contravene the European convention on human rights. If we had thought that it would do that, we should not have brought it to the House in its present form.

The European convention on human rights specifically recognises that the protection of official secrets is a legitimate concern for any Government. The Bill has been carefully restricted only to those areas that require the protection of the criminal law. Where disclosure of such information may not always be harmful, specific harm tests have been introduced. All six of my right hon. and hon. Friends who spoke in support of the Bill mentioned those tests. The tests have been ignored by the Opposition and in Committee we shall have to take them through the Bill line by line.

In his marvellous speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury summed up all the protections that are available to the media. The House should recognise that we have constructed the Bill in such a way that no media defendant will be convicted except on the clearest evidence that he knew or had good reason to know the harm that he was doing. *[Interruption.]* It was not my article in *The Guardian*. I am not allowed to accept payment from *The Guardian*. I write for it gratis.

The Bill deserves the support of all my right hon. and hon. Friends. The Security Service Bill deserved support because it put the Security Service on a statutory footing and provided avenues of redress via a tribunal and commissioner, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) said in an intervention, and because it gives all the protection of the European convention on human rights.

The present Bill deserves the support of the House because it will remove from the criminal law unnecessary restrictions on freedom of speech and the freedom to publish. It will ensure that secrets which must continue to be protected by the criminal law will be effectively protected. It will place on the statute book clear, reasonable and enforceable legislation. For the first time it will define in most circumstances the harm arising from the unauthorised disclosure of official information. It will leave it to the jury to decide whether or what harm has been done. The Bill will provide a fair and effective law on official secrets. That is surely what the House seeks and the choice before the House is clear.

Opposition speeches, and especially the speech by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, were wholly appropriate to this festive, melodramatic and pantomime season. In recent weeks the Opposition have denigrated our security services. They have belittled the importance of national security and forgotten their own record in Government. The Government of which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was a member made no attempt to introduce anything remotely approaching the Bill. The Labour party has been so long out of Government that it has forgotten that ministerial responsibility for the safety of the nation is right, and it has so little hope or expectation of office in the future that it no longer shrinks from playing party politics with security matters.

The Opposition's recent record on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, the Security Service Bill and now on the Official Secrets Bill is shameful. The Labour party's comments are wholly inaccurate and ill conceived, compared with the Government's proposals which are the sensible way to reform the law. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 221.

Division No. 27] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Allason, Rupert	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Amess, David	Buck, Sir Antony
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Budgen, Nicholas
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Burns, Simon
Ashby, David	Burt, Alistair
Atkins, Robert	Butcher, John
Baldry, Tony	Butler, Chris
Bellingham, Henry	Butterfill, John
Benyon, W.	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Carrington, Matthew
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Carttiss, Michael
Bottomley, Peter	Cash, William
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Bowis, John	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Chapman, Sydney
Brazier, Julian	Chope, Christopher

Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
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Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
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Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
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Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
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Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
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Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim

Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
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Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
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Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
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Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
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Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
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Godman, Dr Norman A.
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Graham, Thomas
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Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Air Crash (Scotland)

10.12 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

As the House may be aware, there has been a major air crash at Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire, involving a Pan Am Boeing 747 on route from London Heathrow to New York, reported to have more than 250 people on board.

The House will appreciate that, at the present time, there are very few facts available. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is flying to the scene tonight. The emergency telephone numbers have been given on television. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make a full statement to the House tomorrow.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Leader of the House for his courtesy in making this statement. I am sure that everyone in the House recognises that there is nothing that can be said by the Secretary of State for Transport at this time.

I am sure that the whole House joins in offering sympathy to those who have suffered and who are grieving. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] We also offer our best wishes to the emergency services who are currently carrying out their desperately difficult tasks. I am sure that the whole House is confident that they will be doing so with the dedication and professionalism that we have come to expect.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the words that he has spoken.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I hope that the House will agree that we cannot carry this matter further, but I will call the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) in whose constituency this accident happened.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): This terrible disaster occurred in the centre of my constituency, and the hearts of all hon. Members will be with those who have lost their lives, with the relatives and with the seriously injured—many of whom may be my constituents—as well as those who have been killed in the aircraft. I am fully confident that tonight the rescue services, the Health Service, the police, hospitals and the fire service will do magnificent work to help those who are still alive. I will be going north to the site with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and I apologise for the fact that I shall not be present in the Chamber tomorrow for the statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I know that he spoke for the whole House and I hope that he will reach Scotland as soon as possible to do what he can there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: After these very solemn matters, we return to the business of the House and the debate on structural funds.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

European Community Structural Funds

[Relevant document: Framework Regulation on the Structural Funds described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 7th June 1988.]

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7397/1/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 21st November 1988 on reform of the Structural Funds, 10025/86 on the activities of the European Regional Development Fund in 1985, 10308/87 on the activities of the Fund in 1986, 6969/87 on the application of the European Regional Development Fund Regulation, 7002/87 on the social and economic situation of the regions of the Community and COM(88)501 on the future of rural society; supports the Government's aim of maximising receipts from the Funds while ensuring that they are concentrated on the regions and areas of greatest need and disbursed with due financial discipline; and endorses the Government's aim of supporting comprehensive Community consideration of rural issues.

In introducing this short debate I think it would be sensible for me to make a relatively brief contribution in explaining the documents with which we are concerned and then, if I am able and with the permission of the House, to direct my comments to the points that may be raised during the debate.

During 1988 the European Community has been conducting a major reform of its three structural funds —the European regional development fund, the European social fund and the guidance section of the European agricultural fund. The reform is due to come into force on 1 January 1989.

I regret that we have not before now been able to find time to debate the issue in the House. The main part of the negotiation on the four most recent regulations took place during the summer recess. The Community issued its proposals in French on 29 July and by 17 October they were being discussed in the Foreign Affairs Council. That timetable caused particular difficulties for our scrutiny procedure. The present position is that this week's Foreign Affairs Council agreed on the terms of the regulations, but of course subject, in the United Kingdom's case, to a parliamentary scrutiny reservation.

The principal documents then are the new framework regulation adopted on 24 June—

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend is no doubt more aware than the rest of us of the vast amount of money involved and the vast import of the issue that he is discussing with the House tonight. Could he tell the House—I think it is the case—why it was that the House was not enabled to debate this issue before a common position was agreed with our Community partners? It is very difficult to influence a matter of this importance and magnitude if the Government have already agreed a common position with other Community members. What can the House then do about it?

Mr. Atkins: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern, which he represents fairly frequently in the House. In my opening remarks, I endeavoured to explain that much of the activity occurred between 29 July and 17 October, when the House was not sitting. That is a particular problem of the scrutiny process. It may be that the authorities of the House will have to consider whether there are easier ways. Clearly, we cannot discuss matters when the House is in recess. That is a fact of life that we have to face.

Mr. Marlow: This is a vast amount of public money. Was there any rush to get this thing agreed? Would it not have been possible to delay coming to a common position? Do the Government want to steamroller all this stuff through the House? My hon. Friend will be aware of the fact that there is a complaint about a democratic deficit. There is a very significant democratic deficit when it comes to regional policies—policies which the Government in this country have thrown out now being thrust upon us by the European Community, involving vast sums of public money. Why could not the Government delay and bring it to the House before they agreed the common position?

Mr. Atkins: I am aware, as are many right hon. and hon. Members from all parts of the House, of my hon. Friend's position on European matters. That does not mean that his comment is invalid. I understand his point, but in essence we are asking the House to agree tonight to something that will be to the United Kingdom's benefit. I hope that my hon. Friend understands that it was in the interests of both my Department and those associated with us in arguing the case in Europe to press the case as strongly as we could.

That does not negate the fact that the scrutiny procedure, to which my hon. Friend and I have both made reference, took place at a time when the House was in recess. That is a fact of life. It may be that my hon. Friend will decide that, in future, he ought not to observe the long parliamentary recess from July to October so that such matters can be discussed. I have tried to make crystal clear the situation. I cannot gainsay the facts, however hard my hon. Friend presses me.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister is not kidding me. I shall tell him straight. He could have arranged for Parliament to be recalled. He can take the grin off his face. It is very nice for the Government to be doing things during the recess, so that we cannot get at them. Bearing in mind the amount of money involved for the people of this country, the Government should have taken the opportunity to recall Parliament so that the matter could be discussed before any decision was taken.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman flatters me with a power that I did not think I had. It does not fall to me to recall Parliament. If Parliament had been recalled, the hon. Gentleman, like me, would not have found it easy to return, as we would probably have been on our annual holidays. Recalling Parliament to debate such a measure is not as easy as the hon. Gentleman would have us believe. As the debate progresses, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand, as will other right hon. and hon. Members, that much of the concern being expressed is from hon. Members who, quite legitimately and honourably, are opposed to our membership of the European Community.

Mr. Marlow *rose*—

Mr. Atkins: No, I must make progress. A number of right hon. and hon. Gentleman wish to contribute. My hon. Friend has made two pressing interventions, and if he is able to catch Madam Deputy Speaker's eye, I feel sure that he will be able to persuade——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Minister has made it clear that he will not give way again at this stage.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This is taking Father Christmas too far—how much money?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must wait. He will find out how much money is involved in due course.

I have indicated the reasons for the problems surrounding the scrutiny procedure. I turn to the documents involved. The principal documents are the new framework regulation adopted on 24 June and the four further regulations that I have mentioned. They comprise one each for the three funds and a horizontal regulation applying to all three.

Two of the documents before the House, No. 7937/1/88 and the unnumbered one, are the Commission's proposals for these four regulations. These two documents are identical apart from an extra cover sheet on one of them. A third document, COM(88)501, is a Commission paper on the future of rural society. The other three documents before the House are more for background or reference and they are regular Commission reports, all of them now a year or more out of date. One of them, No. 7002/87, was controversial at the time it came out, in June 1987, because of a so-called synthetic index, which attempted to measure the relative severity of different regions' problems and gave some odd results. I can assure the House that that index has had no influence on the subsequent reform of the funds.

The funds are to be devoted to five objectives set out in the framework regulations. The first objective is promoting the development and structural adjustment of the regions whose development is lagging behind.

Mr. Skinner: Like Sunderland.

Mr. Atkins: The second objective is converting the regions seriously affected by industrial decline.

Mr. Skinner: Like Sunderland.

Mr. Atkins: The third objective is combating long-term unemployment.

Mr. Skinner: Sunderland again.

Mr. Atkins: The fourth objective is combating youth unemployment.

Mr. Skinner: Sunderland again.

Mr. Atkins: The fifth objective, with a view to reform of the common agricultural policy, is speeding up the adjustment of agricultural structures and promoting the development of rural areas.

The administration of the funds will lie in the hands of a former colleague of ours, Mr. Bruce Millan, and his new colleagues in the European Commission. In important cases, we have ensured that the regulations provide that the Commission is to act in agreement with the member states or after consulting the three new committees on which member states are to be represented. My right hon. Friends and hon. Friends, Secretaries of State and Ministers, and I will be in constant touch with the Commission throughout the five years the regulations are to run before the next review. I know that hon. Members will not hesitate to get in touch with me, as in the past, if they wish to take up particular points in Brussels. I invite the House to support me in accepting these regulations.

10.28 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): First, I shall express our concern about the lack of consultation that has taken place on this extremely important batch of regulations. For the record, on 19 October the Select Committee on European Legislation strongly recommended that these regulations be brought before the House at the earliest opportunity. The manner in which the Select Committee and, therefore, the House have been treated is nothing less than contemptuous. The work done by the Select Committee in scrutinising European legislation on a weekly basis should, at least, have a little more priority given to it by the Secretary of State. The Opposition, like many others, wish to ensure that Members are consulted, either through the Select Committee or through the House itself.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On the question of the House having these discussions at an earlier time, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) said that the Committee recommended a debate on 19 October. The Select Committee took up the matter again on 25 November. It was not purely a matter of timing and the House being in recess made it impossible to have the debate. Does the hon. Gentleman agree? Does he also agree that Ministers are in considerable difficulty in bringing these matters before the House, given the current regulations governing the Select Committee? This requires consideration by the House as a whole.

Mr. Caborn: It is clear from the minutes of 19 October that provision could have been made for this debate to take place in the House before this late hour. This is just about the last opportunity to debate these regulations before they come into operation on 1 January 1989. Provision could have been made earlier. I was a member of the Select Committee and there was always a battle between Ministers about provision for debates on the Floor of the House.

Before I deal with the main documents——

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Caborn: No, because many hon. Members with genuine constituency concerns wish to take part in the debate. The hon. Gentleman may want to discuss the constitutional position, but he has plenty of opportunity to do that.

Before I deal with the regulations, it is only fair that I should put on the record the great fear that is felt around the country, especially in the less developed regions, about 1992 and the Government's attitude to the regions and to what is happening in member states.

I refer to a document that has been before the Commission, which was commissioned by Cambridge Economic Consultants, suggesting that the effects on individual regions will vary according to location and

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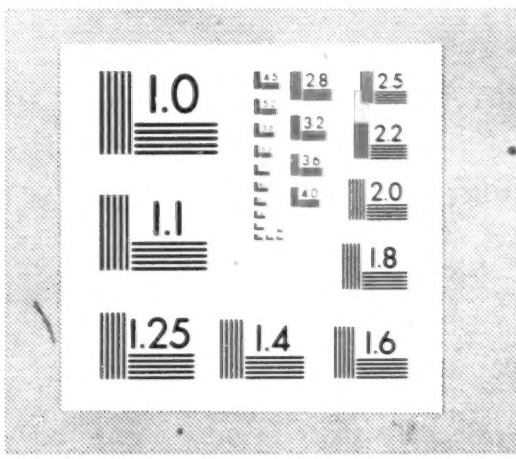

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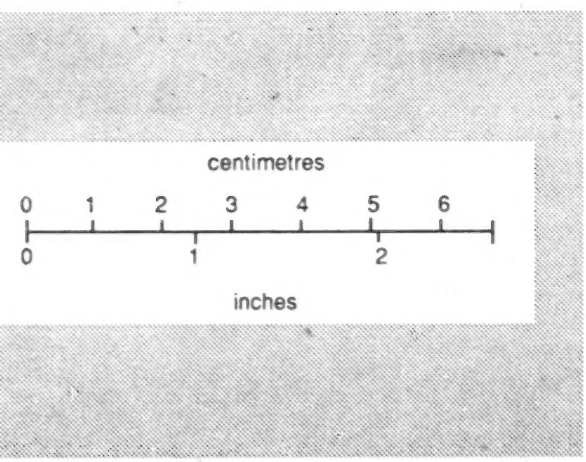

[Mr. Caborn]

economic characteristics. There is therefore a danger that the already disadvantaged regions will become weaker with "overheating" occurring in those that are already well favoured. That analysis has subsequently been confirmed by the regional policy directorate of the EC in a paper calling for improved infrastructure, increased local development—including the small business sector—and the targeted allocation of the increased EC structural funds. Unlike France, Belgium and many other member states, the United Kingdom Government have published little further research on the parameters for individual region's economic attractiveness and projected sector activity. However, it can be assumed that the direct economic benefits will further accrue to those regions with effective road and rail links to the south-east and the Channel tunnel, thereby widening that discrepancy. That concern is real.

One conclusion reached by the report of the department of applied economics at the university of Cambridge, entitled "The Regional Impact of Policies Implemented in the Context of Completing the Community's Internal Market by 1992", was:

"Another important conclusion of this paper is that the regional effects of completing the internal market are likely to intensify the polarisation between regions enjoying cumulative growth and cumulative decline. In addition, market liberalisation could well precipitate certain vulnerable regions into cumulative decline. The implied scale of the problems indicates that regional policy needs to be significantly strengthened. Self-correcting market mechanisms"—

this is an important point as far as this Government are concerned—

"have been shown, in the past, to work either inadequately or not at all".

That view has been put forward by the Commission in the documents that we are considering. Unless the Government take note of those points, there could well be further devastation in many of the northern regions.

We should consider the lack of regional input over the past five or six years—during which there has been the abolition of the regional grant regime—in the light of yesterday's press conference by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier). Yesterday's edition of *The Guardian* contained the headline,

"Minister puts brake on urban aid".

The article states:

"In a gentle retreat from the central strand of Mrs. Thatcher's Action for Cities programme, launched six months ago, Mr. Trippier said yesterday it was more important to ensure the existing 10 urban development corporations 'are already up and running and established' than to designate any new UDC areas.

He was speaking at a Department of Environment press conference, where he launched an annual report on the department's inner cities programmes, which cost more than £500 million a year."

I ask the Government to consider the fact that about £22 billion has been removed from local government in reductions in the rate support grant since 1979, and that a further £700 million has been taken from the regions with the abolition of regional support grant. Those two factors alone clearly show that in the removal of resources the opportunity to try to effect some type of regeneration, rebuilding and restructuring in those areas has been missed by the Government.

The 12th annual report—one of the documents that we are discussing—has tried to develop the integrated operations programme. Page 37 outlines the effects of the integrated regional development operation. There has been co-operation with local authorities. Indeed, there was an announcement today in *The Guardian*—I gather that it will be in the rest of the press tomorrow—of a £600 million grant to Strathclyde and to Yorkshire and Humberside. That has come about because of the co-operation of the local authorities.

The same document also refers to the development of the region's endogenous potential. That was dealt with in articles 15, 16 and 27—the only parts of the grant regime that go direct to local authorities. Local authorities got together a package, but there was a delay because the Department of Trade and Industry would not submit to Brussels as there was to be a direct payment to local authorities under article 15.

There was a crisis meeting in November because the Commission was not prepared to concede that local authorities should be treated differently from national Government. There was a compromise—the three-year package for the whole of the integrated operations development programme would go ahead, but local authorities would be allowed only year one funding.

That has meant that the business initiative centre that Lord Young opened just a few weeks ago is now in jeopardy for financial reasons. Areas for small and medium-sized businesses that have been established are in jeopardy unless year two and three funding is available. Is the Minister prepared to give a commitment that year two and three funding under article 15 for the integrated operations development programme will be forthcoming?

It would be wrong of us to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to start using establishments created for them if we know that we shall have to shut them down for lack of funds in years two and three. The Commission has tried to press the Government to accept three-year funding, but because of their dogmatic approach the Government would accept funding only for year one.

We broadly welcome the more effective and co-ordinated approach to grant regimes, but there are several areas about which there is anxiety. We also welcome the increase in the structural fund's allocation. Many of us have argued for that for many years.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Caborn: No, we have only one and a half hours and several of my hon. Friends want to raise issues that concern their constituencies.

The package would have been considerably better if the Government had accepted what was proposed in the initial round of discussions, when it was proposed that all the money for structural fund development should be additional. The result would have been about £9 billion for the regions. I suppose that it was in splendid isolation that they fought the battle. We believe that they have now got that figure down to an extra £1 billion.

There is a consultation document out at the moment on local government in England and Wales entitled "Capital Expenditure and Finance: a Consultation Paper". Page 26, which deals with European regional development fund grants, says:

"The Departments have an open mind on the treatment of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grants. Local authority expenditure financed by ERDF grants is public expenditure (and such grants are paid for by the UK taxpayer). So at present an authority obtaining ERDF grant do not thereby obtain additional spending power. The present treatment could be mirrored under the new system by treating ERDF grants received as a form of credit, which would require use of a corresponding amount of credit approval. An alternative treatment, however, would be to allow ERDF grants to be a source of both finance and spending power for local authorities receiving them. But the implication of this is that there would be a reduction in the national total available for credit approvals."

If the first proposition contained in section A.31 of the consultation document were agreed, it would break the agreement that has been reached, under the structural fund arrangement, that additional finances would be additional to the capital spend that has already been determined. If the second proposition were agreed, we could top-slice and the poorer regions would benefit. But a penalty would be paid by the better off regions. The fairer proposition is the second one, but all the advice that I have received is that if the first proposition—to mirror what is happening now—is achieved, the additionality will not be there and the agreement will be broken.

There is anxiety about the tighter criteria. If the £600 million announced today for Strathclyde and South Yorkshire had been evaluated under the new regime, not so much money would have been available. My hon. Friends the Members for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for other south Yorkshire constituencies will be trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that they can talk about the implementation problems that they perceive in their areas. Today I received a document from Yorkshire which, although welcoming the new regime, said that there would be problems in the area.

Will the Minister confirm a quotation from European Information Service bulletin No. 92? It states:

"Departments will liaise with the Commission in the selection of areas and they hope that all present Assisted Areas and Urban Programme Areas will qualify."

We should like to know whether those are the criteria. If they are, it will create difficulties because selective assistance was last revamped in 1984, since when there has been an increase in unemployment and a decline in industrial activity in several places which are neither assisted areas nor urban development areas.

I hope that the Government will change their attitude to local authorities to one of more co-operation. The changes in the criteria and the more flexible approach to the structural fund make it important to have more co-operation between the localities and central Government. If that does not exist, we shall not gain the advantages that the structural fund could mean, especially for less well off regions.

Unless the Government take seriously the fair body of opinion about the implementation of the Single European Act and promote some regional policy, instead of leaving the matter simply to market forces, there will inevitably be a further deterioration in the regions. During the next two or three years we have an opportunity to put right some of the problems in the regions so that we can take advantage of the fund, but unless the Government make available the finance, and unless there is confidence that at least a dialogue can begin so that we can remove the Government's dogmatic approach to local government, the northern regions will be unable to take advantage of the new structural fund.

10.44 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The Minister said that these matters were discussed in Europe during the summer recess and that, therefore, he was unable to bring them before the House. In our correspondence with the Minister's Department, members of the Select Committee on European Legislation stated as early as 19 October that these matters would require debate. The Minister's reply was that he could not recommend a debate, because no common position had been arrived at in European Community Ministers' meetings.

That brings me to the point of which the House should take note. Ministers believe that they cannot bring to the attention of the House serious matters that are being discussed in Europe and the various arguments and debates that are going on before a common position is reached. That common position must then be referred to the European Parliament for comment and amendment. It is referred back to the Council of Ministers, who adopt it, and it is then presented to the House. The Minister and his Department have found themselves in that difficulty tonight. The Greek president wanted the matter to be adopted on 1 January this year. According to advice from the Department of Trade and Industry, it would be to the advantage of the country if it were so adopted. The programme was accelerated at the last minute. The result is that hon. Members are here tonight, within 24 hours of the House rising for Christmas, discussing this extremely important matter.

The House, let alone the country, has not been able to absorb what these matters involve. Hon. Members must read a large number of documents available from the Vote Office to enable them to understand what is being proposed. We must co-operate with Ministers and understand their difficulties in bringing these matters before the House before Ministers agree them in the European Community. That is an important matter.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): It is a most important point. Not only are these matters before the House this evening—unlike some of my colleagues, I speak from a pro-European stance—but we are at a real disadvantage. We do not officially know what is proposed by the Commission in Brussels. A matter goes to the Council of Ministers, there is a political exchange, and positions are set as a result of negotiations. It is then too late for us effectively to influence it. Apart from our influence tonight, that has serious implications for businesses and firms that have new regulations and standards. Back Bench hon. Members have no means of being able to alert our constituents to what is going on or to bring pressure to bear on Ministers before they take a decision.

Mr. Wells: My hon. Friend is entirely right. That is the point that I have been trying to make. The House must take it seriously and help Ministers to bring such matters before it before decisions are made. We are discussing a regulation that has been agreed. There is nothing that the Minister can do to alter it.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on apparently doing a great deal of

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homework to understand some of the implications of the measure. The guidance from the clerks to the Select Committee on European Legislation states:

"It is very difficult to assess the full implications of this proposal in the absence of the complete text."

That is our position. It is not good for Europe or the House, and it is certainly not good for our constituents.

It seems that we are getting co-ordination on a series of structural adjustment measures.

Mr. Marlow: There is just one other point I would like to put to my hon. Friend. The letter from the Department states:

"In view of the extent of the implementing powers that the Commission proposes for itself and in the absence of the supplementary proposals . . . it is not yet possible to assess fully all the policy implications."

Here we are stuck with the wretched thing. There is nothing we can do to influence it. We do not even know what it is. The Government do not know what it is.

Mr. Wells: I endorse what my hon. Friend said. It is a matter of genuine regret for the Minister as well as the House.

This appears to be a co-ordination measure which will target areas of deprivation which need help from the European fund. That is to be welcomed. The Minister said that it would be to the advantage of the United Kingdom. When he replies, will he tell us how it will advantage us? What sort of sums of money can we expect? Why was he anxious to agree the measure and why did he agree it? He has not had time to tell us even that and I am sure that both the House and the country want to hear about that.

How will these matters be administered? Who makes the applications? How is it determined in Britain and how is it determined in Brussels? How can we tell people who stand to gain from this measure how they are to find out the details which clearly the House lacks tonight?

10.50 pm

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): I make no apology for highlighting the unique position of my constituency—the only Labour constituency which does not receive any rate support grant. Of 18 councils which do not receive rate support grant, 17 are Conservative in the rolling hills of Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire or where the wealth is, and the other one is Bassetlaw.

Bassetlaw does not have assisted area status. It used to, but it was taken away. Yet we have massive unemployment. That is peculiar. We used to get £3·8 million in rate support grant in 1977, but now we get nothing. Yet we have few new industries. Because we have three pits and three power stations, the Government say that we have sufficient rates from industry.

The industries provide us with pollution, slag heaps, heavy lorries, acid rain and everything else associated with them. Nottingham county council takes 85 per cent. of industrial rates, leaving Bassetlaw district council, which is 45 miles from Nottingham and has all the aggravation of the industry, with 15 per cent. That stops us getting rate support grant.

Out of 633 constituencies, 606 have a better employment rate than we have in Bassetlaw. We are at the bottom of the fourth division for new jobs. Our council is not loony Left of even Labour-controlled—it is a hung council. *[Interruption.]* It is a Labour-controlled council, but Labour does not have a majority. There is no silly spending. We are not being punished for daft spending. We do not throw money away on daft items. The committees meet in the evening. It is a solid, responsible council which went to Brussels to get extra cash and which has been lobbying the Minister and doing its best to rectify the position. Yet everywhere we turn, help is removed. In 1980, assisted area status was removed and rate support grant has dwindled to nothing. Yet we have one of the highest rates of unemployment in Britain.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Does my hon. Friend accept that part of his constituency comes under Mansfield district council, which is a solid Labour council? [HON. MEMBERS: "Loony Left."] It is certainly not loony Left. It does not waste money either. It, too, has been involved in trips to Brussels. It is losing businesses because of its lack of assisted area status. Large firms are leaving to go to areas with assisted area status.

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend is right.

Only 10 constituencies in England have a worse unemployment rate than Bassetlaw. Three are in the same county as Bassetlaw—Nottinghamshire—and one is next door in Derbyshire. Unemployment is dire. In the largest town in the constituency there is 14·7 per cent. male unemployment. There is nearly 8 per cent. female unemployment. The percentage has fallen slightly because of part-time jobs in retail shops which have recently been constructed—there is a large Co-op and a large Tesco—and in parts of the food industry. About 20 per cent. of all the workers in the area are employed in the declining industries of coal and textiles. A third of the unemployed are under 25 years of age, despite the Government's training schemes, for which there is no lack of applications. Half the unemployed have been in that position for 12 months or longer.

The Minister read out the criteria set by the EEC and drew attention to the five clauses to be satisfied. The House should understand that Bassetlaw has the third highest unemployment rate in the east midlands, although I accept that the rate in Mansfield is slightly higher. The rate in Skegness is also higher, but that is seasonal. It is higher in the winter and lower in the summer. If we exclude the Northern Ireland constituencies, Bassetlaw and Mansfield have some of the worst rates of unemployment among the remaining 633 constituencies. There are few constituencies with worse rates.

Unemployment has fallen nationally by 15 per cent. in the past year, but by only 5 per cent. in my constituency. With the declining coal and textile industries, there are real fears for the long term. Over the past few years the east midlands, the area within which Bassetlaw falls, has received only 0·6 per cent. of the development grants paid by the Common Market. Mansfield and Bassetlaw are on the fringes of the south Yorkshire steel and coal belt, but as the constituencies are within Nottinghamshire and the east midlands they lose practically everything that is available.

The anomalies stemming from assisted area status are well known to the Minister. Many of the areas that enjoy that status have far lower rates of unemployment than Mansfield and Bassetlaw. The Minister has stated—he may have had valid reasons for so doing—that he will not engage in a redistribution of assisted area status until after

the next general election. Those who live in Bassetlaw and Mansfield receive nothing from the Government and will be left to struggle because of the anomalies within the present system.

That means that we have a good claim for Common Market cash. Indeed, the Minister has put Bassetlaw on the list of areas that he recommends should receive the cash. The Common Market will say, however, "If your own Government do not give you any money, why should we?" That is what it will throw at us. Bassetlaw will be competing with Greece, Portugal, Ireland, the bottom half of Italy and the French islands in the Caribbean for Common Market cash.

We have heard about the second objective of the new rules and the list to be formulated, but nothing has been said about how the list, or league table, will be drawn. Will the assisted areas be at the top of the list? Will areas such as Bassetlaw be at the top? What sort of ranking will there be?

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, talked about additionality. The Common Market has made it clear that there must be additional money, not substitution money, and I have the feeling that if the Government are giving nothing the Common Market will also give nothing. In effect, there will be a pound for a pound. I accept that rate support grant is Government support, but if the Common Market determines that it will provide cash only for areas receiving Government support poor old Bassetlaw will fall between two stools—it does not have assisted area status and it does not receive RSG. Yet 90 per cent. of other constituencies enjoy a better employment rate and better employment prospects. There is a massive anomaly.

I hope that the Minister will tell us what additionality is. The EEC document says:

"The money must be genuinely concentrated on geographical areas most seriously affected."

On any geographical or statistical basis, on any criterion of youth unemployment or long-term unemployment that the Minister lays down, my constituency must be counted as such an area—unless there is an additionality factor. Will the Minister explain the principle behind the idea of "additional to", as opposed to "not a substitution for"? How will that apply to constituencies such as mine, and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale)? This is a glaring loophole, and it means a great deal to us. I hope that the Minister will meet a deputation from my constituency to explain the issue.

11.2 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Before discussing the structural funds, I want to comment on the presentation and accuracy of the documents before us tonight. In my copies, some pages are duplicated, others are missing and the reference numbers do not tally. Earlier this afternoon, the House heard my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) draw Mr. Speaker's attention to the fact that an important document from the Community Court of Auditors was not available. That gives us great cause for concern.

This nation is now in Europe and destined to stay there. It is high time we got one or two things straight—not only the paperwork, but the importance that the Government attach to European matters in the parliamentary timetable, the importance generally attached to European matters and our general relationship with European institutions, including the European Parliament and its Members.

For 15 years, I have had only one reservation about Britain in Europe: whether we shall go into the Community with a will and determination to succeed. I can see no benefit in entering the Community unless we play to win. We are all well aware that the stakes are high, so it is important to play to win. My reservation—my fear—is in no way allayed by some of the antics of the House or some of the utterances of hon. Members.

The United Kingdom must play a full part in Europe by taking the lead in its counsels, by making it the sort of community we want to live in and, not least, by getting the best deal from it that we can for the people of these islands. The alternatives do not bear contemplation: isolationism and the worst of all worlds, socially and commercially.

Some hon. Members will have heard me say before that I think the structural funds are a lottery. They are cash-limited; it follows that not all projects will be treated even-handedly. I have also referred to the funds as a roundabout. Money is taken from us, the taxpayers, and ultimately remitted to Brussels. Then the big shuffle starts, and we all get involved in trying to get the money back again.

Another aspect about the funds that worries me is that they are wide open to abuse—or rather, corruption. They lead to the sort of headlines that we have seen in the press in the last seven days, such as, "Traders print money" and "A crop of fraud". The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who left his accustomed place a moment ago, spoke about the scandal, of which we are becoming increasingly aware, of the trade in beef in the Community. Sadly, we do not know enough about that because it was dealt with in the document that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East was unable to obtain in the Vote Office.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Is my hon. Friend aware that, this year and for many years past, tens of thousands of tonnes of corn come across from France, are unloaded in the south Devon ports, stored and taken within a few days to Southampton and re-exported to France? Who benefits from all this activity?

Mr. Gill: My hon. Friend asks a good question. The British farmer does not benefit; nor does the producer on the other side of the Channel. The consumer does not benefit either. In such cases, the actions of middlemen or traders do the trade in the products a great disservice and bring the trade and the bona fide traders into disrepute. As my hon. Friend knows, we currently spend no less than £12·5 billion per annum on the storage and disposal of surplus crops and agricultural produce. None of that benefits the producer.

Quite apart from the structural funds being open to abuse, a sheer administrative nightmare is created. The Public Accounts Committee recently heard evidence from the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce about refunds to British exporters which are up to 12 months in arrears. The board gave computer problems as a reason or explanation for the delay. That is a lame excuse and perhaps it warrants further inspection.

My next point is allied to the structural funds. We are 10 days from the end of the year and our beef farmers have just learned that the scheme that they expected to end on

[Mr. Gill]

31 December will continue until 5 March. Hon. Members cannot dispute the fact that, administratively, there is much to be desired in the workings of the European Community. On a positive note, we can help to build a much better future in Europe. That is important, and our people need to understand it. We are in Europe, and we have to get the best terms.

Mr. Meale: The hon. Gentleman talks about understanding. Perhaps he would reflect on what he has said so far to see whether it had anything to do with the structural funds. Will he get to the point and deal with structural funds? He has already used up much time, so perhaps he will now let us have his thoughts on the subject under debate so that we can hear other hon. Members.

Mr. Gill: I am pleased to reply to the hon. Gentleman and give him my views on the structural funds. They have a low priority in terms of achieving what we expect and need to achieve in the European Community. The top priority is a market in which there are no fiscal, technical or practical barriers. That is the goal. From that, all else flows. The structural funds do not form part of these priorities. I suggest that they work against them.

We must not put our trust in the ideologues and Eurocrats. We must have faith and confidence in the individual, who will unfailingly adjust to changing circumstances and new opportunities and meet the challenges of tomorrow rather than those of yesterday. The sum of individual human endeavour will give us a better, more permanent and useful result than anything devised by Governments or bureaucracies. Our job as politicians is to create a climate in which the legitimate aspirations of individual citizens can flourish, to the benefit of themselves, their families and their countries.

I support the Government's pragmatic approach. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to heed my warnings about the structural funds, not least because I for one am sceptical that when the Government talk about ensuring that the funds are concentrated on the regions in greatest need, that means the United Kingdom. On that point, I have the gravest doubts.

11.11 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The House would do well to accept that we are in Europe. Whether we lump it or like it, the documents show some of the results. We must get the best possible deals. It is no good arguing that we have paid our money and then go begging it back.

I should like to refer to regional funds. On 29 November, in an Adjournment debate, I put the case for Wakefield metropolitan district council. I am worried about those hard-hit areas which are not included in the travel-to-work areas which attract assisted area status. I shall not put Wakefield's case at length because it has been well documented in the House. But Wakefield district is a prime example of traditional industry in decline. Until recently, the major industry was coal mining. Only five pits are left, employing 4,000 miners. Only four years ago there were 16 pits, employing 15,000 miners. Few jobs have replaced them, so the district's two travel-to-work areas have the highest unemployment in west Yorkshire. Unemployment is higher than in many assisted areas. A written answer on 25 November revealed that there are 17 intermediate areas with lower unemployment than the Wakefield and Dewsbury travel-to-work area and 35 intermediate areas with lower unemployment than the Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area.

In the Adjournment debate on 29 November, the Minister was good enough to confirm that west Yorkshire met the criteria for objective 2. But will the European Commission select the most severely affected parts of west Yorkshire? My main worry is that the Commission will decide that only assisted areas will be eligible. If the Commission decides that only areas that have qualified for assisted status will be acknowledged as eligible for aid from the regional development fund, areas with unemployment and industrial decline levels that are not nearly as bad as the areas to which I have referred may attract grants. If that is so, the regional fund will not work fairly. I am aware that the Government have included Wakefield on the list which they have presented to the Commission. However, we are not aware at this stage whether that full list will attract regional development funds. If it does not, the areas to which I have referred will fare badly.

After the Adjournment debate, the Minister kindly wrote to me suggesting that the Commission may stick to its original decision, and will consider areas outside those that attract assisted area status. One hopes that at the end of the day that will be so. I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying that issue.

The Government have proposed Wakefield as an objective 2 area. I understand that the Government first sent their proposed list of objective 2 areas to the European Commission in a letter of 19 July. Would the Minister be willing to place a copy of that letter in the Library? I hope that he will be able to tell us in his reply.

The Minister's letter referred to a meeting in Leeds between one of his officials and officers of the five west Yorkshire district councils. At that meeting, it was suggested that in January the Commission would once again ask Member states to nominate the most seriously affected parts of eligible counties. If the Government resubmit their list, will Wakefield still be included?

The regulations set a timetable for the next stage. The Government must submit regional plans to the European Commission by the end of March. If the objective 2 list is not finalised until the end of January, there will be only two months in which to submit the regional plans.

The European Commission has allowed itself a little longer in which to respond to the regional plans. It will have six months in which to draft a community support framework. That framework will determine what measures can be financed by the European funds and how much will be set aside for each operation. It is only when the community support framework has been completed that decisions on measures can be taken, which is not until the end of September 1989.

Little time is available to draw up the regional plans, but the plans will be the key to obtaining European funds over the next three years. It is vital to an area such as Wakefield that the regional plan takes account of the programme drawn up by the local council and local industry. Will the regional plan for Yorkshire and Humberside take the Wakefield programme into account? I hope that the Minister will give a commitment that all interested local authorities will be consulted on the drafting of regional plans.

The regulations refer to a partnership between local authorities, the Government and the European Commission. If that partnership is to be effective, local authorities must be involved in drawing up the plans.

I have previously drawn the Minister's attention to the programme for the regeneration of the Wakefield district. The district council, together with the chamber of commerce and other local business people, have drawn up an £88 million programme of public investment, designed to stimulate private sector investment in the district. It is summarised in the "Ideas for Action" brochure of which the Minister is aware.

Is the Minister aware that the regulations allow programmes to be submitted before the community support framework is drawn up? They can even be submitted at the same time as the regional plan. That document was first presented to the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in May. Discussions have continued between officers of the council and officials of that Department and the Department of Trade and Industry.

I hope that the Government will back the "Ideas for Action" programme submission to the EC at the earliest opportunity.

The Wakefield district has suffered greatly as a result of the decline in the coal industry and there is a cast iron case for recognition under objective 2. I do not believe that that claim can be refuted and I am glad that the Minister has not sought to do so.

The people of Wakefield are ready to help themselves to revive their area. The district council and business community have joined in partnership to devise the "Ideas for Action" programme. They have approached the Commission for funds to implement it. That partnership must include the Government as well as the Commission and that is why, once again, I ask the Minister to back Wakefield.

11.20 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I am concerned that the proposal places great stress on giving moneys for objective 1. As I understand the documents, objective 1 would debar England, Scotland and Wales from making successful applications. I would have preferred to see much more stress placed on objective 2 for which we would have some chance of qualifying.

I am also worried that, in the projected figures, the United Kingdom's recovery from the funds rises from £750 million to £1 billion by 1992. That seems to represent a diminishing proportion of the growing fund and it will make our rebate position more difficult.

To give the House an idea of the imbalances that the funds will create in moneys distributed around the Community, we can compare Portugal with the EC average. On the basis of the last year for which we have proper figures, Portugal will receive 1·3 per cent. of its gross domestic product in the form of cash from the funds whereas the Community average will be 0·1 per cent. We are talking about a massive transfer of moneys from British taxpayers, and for that matter German and French taxpayers, to Portuguese, Greek and Spanish taxpayers.

We are also talking about the development of Communitywide programmes such as Star and Valorem, which are of dubious value anyway. It would be far better to liberalise the telecommunications industries than to have the Star programme. Those programmes also exclude England, Scotland and Wales. I would rather that we promoted objective 2, tried to cap the total growth of the funds and asked some fairly tough questions about the use to which those moneys are put.

I notice, for example, that Spain and Portugal have been receiving, and will continue to receive, subsidy moneys to build up the industries designed to compete against our own. British taxpayers are helping to finance the growth of the furniture, food and engineering industries in Galicia, which will doubtless then compete on a more favourable cost basis against our domestic production. That is against the spirit of the Treaty of Rome, which I welcomed. I welcome the Common Market, I welcome the free open market, I welcome the strongly enforced competition policy, but I do not welcome English or Scottish taxpayers' money being routed to Galicia to compete against us.

How many of the investments that have been backed by such moneys get into trouble or even go bankrupt? Our experience of that type of force-fed industrial winner picking from Whitehall has been bitter. I wonder whether that experience will be any better if it is directed from Brussels or whether we shall see a lot of money going down the drain in ropey organisations.

I notice that the Court of Auditors report, which was available in the Library, but not elsewhere, backs those of us who have fears about the way in which some of the moneys have been used. It has said of the structural measures of the regional fund:

"the Community, for lack of overall accounting documents and implementation reports, does not carry out any follow-up examinations and does not assess the results achieved."

That is bad enough, but it did some follow-up checks of its own on projects to which regional fund moneys had been applied. It reported:

"In two thirds of the cases studied, the net utilisation rate of the projects was found to be less than 50 per cent.".

There is good evidence from the Court of Auditors report that a lot of the money is going into projects that do not work, are unnecessary or are scarcely necessary in the context in which they are established.

The report considers further examples, but there are too many to cite. One did catch my eye, however, when I read it. The report says:

"In some cases the work has no related economic development objective."

Yet that was the criterion for awarding the moneys in the first place and it quoted the example of the Termoli sewage plant in Italy which had received money, but, according to the European Court of Auditors, did not meet the prime criterion.

As we learn to live with the structural and social funds, I hope that we will learn to ask the tough questions to ensure that the moneys are wisely spent, that not too much money is spent, that no money is wasted and that we edge the criteria away from objective 1 to objective 2. If we do not do that, I do not think that this country will get a fair deal from the funds.

11.24 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): For once I agree with the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood): I too would promote objective 2, because I want some of the Halifax ratepayers' money back into my area. We might be

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

in Europe, but it seems to me that some of us are more equal than others when it comes to the Mickey Mouse lottery that Europe appears to be.

I want to jog the Minister's memory about the fact that I have been in correspondence with him, because the Department of Trade and Industry has not recommended my area for objective 2. When assisted area status was taken from us, we found ourselves—I will not use the over-played term, the "hole in the doughnut"—the hole in the middle of the Polo mint. We are surrounded by areas which have assisted area status, and that has been very damaging to the local economy.

The Minister very kindly wrote to me to explain why we had not been put forward in negotiations as eligible for objective 2. He wrote:

"We had to take a wide range of considerations into account. Calderdale is not alone in the country in having to be omitted and it will not be entirely surrounded by eligible areas even if the Commission agrees to all our recommendations, because Pendle in Lancashire is in a similar position."

We feel slightly betrayed by the Department as a result of that explanation. The Minister continued:

"the average Calderdale unemployment rate over the 3 months April 1985, April 1986 and April 1987, comes just below the EC average when the United Kingdom figures have been harmonised."

I wrote to the Minister stating:

"It would be most helpful if you could let me know the basis for this calculation, and most particularly how an allowance for self-employment has been made, when no figures are available below County levels"—

especially when the figures that are available are notoriously unreliable. I am sure that the Minister will appreciate the importance that we attach to achieving objective 2 status.

The Minister replied:

"Calderdale will not be entirely surrounded by eligible areas".

I replied in my turn:

"Calderdale has a boundary of around 50 miles, 47·5 miles of this is adjoined by areas that the United Kingdom is putting forward as most seriously affected parts under objective 2. The Calderdale-Pendle boundary"—

to which the Minister had referred in his letter—

"is only 2·5 miles long and lies in a remote moorland area."

In fact, Calderdale will be surrounded by 95 per cent. of areas that qualify under objective 2. We will have to go through the process of relocation again, and our industry will be sucked out.

Some of us are suffering under the peculiar logic upon which the funding is based. Will the Minister consider my specific points, because we are seriously disadvantaged? We believe that we will suffer in future, in particular in the textile industry, because things may happen over which we have no control. We desperately need the money, and we want some of our money back.

11.29 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): About one year ago, I served on the Committee considering the Bill that led to the abolition of regional grants. Having spent many days in Committee on the Regional Development Grants (Termination) Bill, I find myself late at night considering a remarkable change in direction. To put that, and the social engineering that I believe lies at the heart of this measure, in perspective, the House may like to know that the amount involved will be £8,500 million in 1992. I have the 1986 Community budget figure, and if one calculates from the documents what percentage that £8,500 million will represent of the Community budget in 1992, converted into ecu, the figure is 13,000 million ecu from a total Community budget of about 35,000 million ecu.

That is an indication of the increased amount of money being made available. My hon. Friends have made the point about scrutiny that I have made repeatedly over the past few years. It is difficult to understand why we find ourselves dealing with matters of such dramatic importance to the United Kingdom so late at night.

The report reveals that, effectively, the money will go to Greece, the mezzogiorno, Portugal, large parts of Spain, and so on—along with the French overseas departments. Those are the areas regarded as most requiring the money. Against the background of the Court of Auditors' report, to which reference has also been made, that matter needs to be carefully examined, and it is one over which a much greater degree of not only scrutiny but control is required.

Recently, members of the Select Committee on European Legislation visited Naples, to whose sewage plant reference has been made. We saw it—it was absolutely chaotic. It did not work, and money was being wasted like the sewage the plant is supposed to treat. It is scandalous that large amounts of British taxpayers' money is being spent on such projects.

I say, not as any kind of anti-European gesture, that it is in the interests of the Community as a whole, and of the United Kingdom as an integral part of it, that we sort out the way in which funds are being spent, that we maintain proper control, and that we ensure that the British taxpayer receives good value for money. As I wish to be brief, that is all I shall say tonight—but much more could be said.

11.32 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am very happy to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), and I agree with every word that he said.

My hon. Friend the Minister said something about my attitude to Europe. I put it to my hon. Friend that he does not really know what my attitude to Europe is. The reason why I made the intervention that I did was that I have quite a strong attitude towards democracy. The way that this matter is being handled is shameful in democratic terms. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford has just said—and I am not blaming the Government or my hon. Friend for this—that this concerns in 1992, in today's money, 13,000 million ecu. That is knocking on for 40 per cent. of Community expenditure. And here we are, nine days, or whatever it is, before 1 January, when it comes into effect, and the die has been cast and the decisions have been taken. Here we are, for one and one half hours late at night, before we disappear for Christmas, almost on the nod, looking at this highly complex and highly important issue.

It really is a massive democratic deficit. What are we talking about? As my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) has said, we are talking about regional policy. Big chance in regional policy? We would have a massive statement, followed by a full-day debate. Our view of regional policy in the Conservative party is totally different from the obscure, Socialist view of the Community. And yet up with it we are having to put at this time of night.

It is talking about urban policy. We have a totally different view on urban policy from the rest of the European Community. It is talking about combating long-term unemployment. Our views as a Conservative Government in this country are very different from those of the other European Community countries.

Let us look at it. Supposing that by stupid economic policies in other European Community countries there is a vast increase in long-term unemployment, that means that those Community countries would get a bigger slice of the cake. So the less efficient their Government, the more disasters they have within their own economies, the more we have to fork out as a result of these policies we are discussing tonight. Reinforcing failure—that is what it is about.

Fourthly,

"facilitating the occupational integration of young people".

I am not quite sure what that gobbledegook means. Obviously, if you have failures in the education system of Greece and Italy, they are going to require more of this bunce that is going around at the moment—again, reinforcing failure. Other people fail, we cough up the money.

My hon. Friend the Minister has said that we have got to take all this on the nod and accept it because it is good for Britain. Who says it is good for Britain? The Government say it is good for Britain. That is not what democracy is about. Democracy is about Parliament deciding what is good for Britain—and Parliament, Madam Deputy Speaker, has not got an earthly. We have not had a chance.

When should we debate it? Well, is it good for Britain? My hon. Friend the Minister has said it is good for Britain. Although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham has said, today we get 15 per cent. of the European regional and social funds, in 1992 we shall get less than 12 per cent. I suppose that is good for Britain, but I cannot work it out, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I dare say you cannot. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will explain to us later on how a reduction of 3 per cent. in our share is actually of benefit to Britain. I look forward to hearing that.

So when are we going to debate these vital and important issues? I ask my hon. Friend, can we debate it before a common position is agreed—because if we do not debate it before a common position is agreed, what chance have we got of influencing it? If a common position is agreed, then it goes before the European Parliament. If the European Parliament does not change that common position, it does not come back to this House again. If the European Parliament does change the common position and it then comes back to the House and we debate it—it having been changed by the European Parliament—at that late stage, what chance have we got of changing these massive, significant and important issues that we are debating tonight?

If I ask my hon. Friend one question this evening, what I want to do is to enlist his support—he has my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary sitting alongside him—as he, I know, is desperately concerned about the democratic deficit and desperately concerned about democracy. Will he, having spoken to my right hon. Friend, give the House an undertaking that in future with important, significant issues like this the House will have an opportunity to debate them before the common position has been taken up?

11.38 pm

Mr. Atkins: With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker. One point that I have learnt since I have been involved with these regional funds is that every hon. Member—or almost every hon. Member—does as I would do, were I still on the Back Benches, and put the case strongly for their constituency or borough in wanting more money, whether from the Government or Europe. That is entirely fair and we would all uphold it. But the problem is that, as a Department, we must consider those requests across the board and make our choice of priorities.

One reason that we took so long originally in plotting the map of assisted areas and development areas, leading up to 1984—as hon. Members who were here at the time will recall—was the vast number of representations. One reason that we do not want to change the map too easily is the amount of effort that would be needed and problems that it would cause, especially in terms of stability and continuity for businesses, local authorities and—dare I say it—hon. Members, as well as their constituents. So we hold to the decision not to change the map before a general election, although that inevitably poses some difficulties.

Opposition Members—and some Conservative Members—have raised their concerns. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made the case for Bassetlaw in his inimitable way—a case with which I have considerable sympathy. He would not expect me to say this evening that I can wave a magic wand, but I hear what he says. I should be delighted to receive a delegation. We do it all the time. I shall be happy to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say, because people take a lot of trouble over such matters, normally across the party divide. I shall be happy to do that, and we can make the necessary arrangements in the new year if he would like that.

Mr. Ashton: Would it be possible for my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) to be included?

Mr. Atkins: Of course—whoever is appropriate in the circumstances. Provided that we can fit them all into a room at the Department of Trade and Industry, I shall be more than happy to see them.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) will not be surprised to learn that, in addition to her representations, my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) has made his case in his own inimitable way—not only for his own area but, as the hon. Lady will be pleased to know, for hers as well—because he recognises the problems. The hon. Lady has written to me again, but because of the post we may be a little behind. I shall certainly make every effort to reply to her and to answer some of the questions that she has raised.

That applies to several of the questions that have been asked. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and I had a delightful Adjournment debate the other evening when he waved booklets at me, and I did the same back at him. I have told him that I will do all I can. However, as I said at the beginning, it is not up to me to pick priorities like that. Wakefield has a case, and it will be pressed as strongly as we can within the context. That is as I suggested to him in that debate.

Mr. Caborn: To clarify the position, I referred to European bulletin No. 92, which said that the criteria to be used by the Minister's Department were based on assisted

[Mr. Caborn]

area status and the urban grant areas. Is the Minister now saying that there will be a criterion outside those two areas that will be considered for submission for the new grant regimes from the Community?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that, as I told his hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford in our recent Adjournment debate, we are putting in one or two areas over and above the assisted areas—let us call them non-assisted areas—for consideration. Several hon. Members of all parties have pressed cases for individual constituencies or boroughs. From that point of view, yes, the report was grossly exaggerated.

Several technical questions arose. I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) who made, as I would have expected, a speech that raised several important questions, as did one or two of my other hon. Friends, who spoke about the difficulties of dealing with such matters late at night and near to Christmas. These matters are important to the country and I understand the views of my hon. Friends, whatever their position on membership of the European Community. My right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary has heard those views, as have other colleagues. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has stated that the matter concerns him also. We shall devote some thought to how best we at the Department of Trade and Industry can help.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful that the Minister has mentioned his Department. Will he not reconsider what he said at the beginning of the debate? Although there were difficulties over the summer recess, the Minister can look to the *Official Report* and see that last Thursday the Leader of the House said that he would have to take action in order for this debate to take place. Will the Minister give an undertaking that his Department will try to secure debates, or let the House authorities know that they should take place, before the common position is decided?

Mr. Atkins: Whenever the hon. Gentleman writes to me or to anyone else about European legislation, we always take him seriously. We would not wish to be at odds with him or his Committee, which plays such a valuable part in such matters. I promise the hon. Gentleman that we shall endeavour to ensure that the difficulties that we have experienced over these regulations do not arise again, if it is within our power to do so. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concerns. He will know from our letters and from the comments that I made earlier that this is not a situation that we enjoy, and that we shall try to make sure that it does not happen again.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) asked a question about additionality. As he said, the Government are considering the future treatment of local government capital receipts. I note his preference for the second alternative in the Green Paper. My colleagues at the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office will make a statement in due course—I cannot say when, but it will sooner rather than later.

The hon. Gentleman raised another point about article 15. He has asked the same question before, and he will receive the same answer, which is that we shall consider possible further applications in the light of the progress that we make with the schemes and with the regulations. We do not have a closed mind on the issue. I understand his point, and it is sensible, but I cannot be drawn on how we will proceed. I ask him to believe that we do not have a closed mind on the matter. We recognise the strength of some of the schemes and hope that we will be able to proceed with them.

This has been a wide-ranging debate, in which key questions have been asked. It would be invidious for me to try to answer all of them now. If, as is certainly the case, I have not dealt with all of them, I shall endeavour to write to hon. Members, just as I did to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford after his recent Adjournment debate. I ask the House to join me in support of the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7397/1/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 21st November 1988 on reform of the Structural Funds, 10025/86 on the activities of the European Regional Development Fund in 1985, 10308/87 on the activities of the Fund in 1986, 6969/87 on the application of the European Regional Development Fund Regulation, 7002/87 on the social and economic situation of the regions of the Community and COM(88)501 on the future of rural society; supports the Government's aim of maximising receipts from the Funds while ensuring that they are concentrated on the regions and areas of greatest need and disbursed with due financial discipline; and endorses the Government's aim of supporting comprehensive Community consideration of rural issues.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Housing

That the draft Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage and Exchequer Contributions) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Stansted Airport (Aircraft Movements)

11.45 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. Its main purpose is to pray the Secretary of State for Transport to alter the routes of aircraft leaving and arriving at Stansted airport, so that built-up areas such as Little Hadham and other villages are avoided as far as possible.

The matter is causing grave disturbance to my constituents. I should like to add to their petition that, at present, no mechanism is installed at Stansted airport to monitor the departure and arrival routes of aircraft to ensure that they follow the laid-down routes. That is a grave omission by the Civil Aviation Authority and the British Airports Authority, and I ask the Department of Transport to take measures immediately to put it right, so that the annoyances are reduced to the absolute minimum.

The petition ends in the customary way with the words:

Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

It is signed by John Merrillian Smith of Camlet, Albury road, Little Hadham, and 160 or so others.

Nurse Grading (Greater Glasgow)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

11.47 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I welcome the fact that all concerned in the dispute in the Greater Glasgow health board are now getting round the negotiating table. We should not, however, let that distract us from examining why the dispute arose and who was responsible for it.

We are not here to debate definitions of "continuing responsibility" or "supervision". Like the Minister, I accept that there is a national dispute in which health boards, quite properly, cannot be involved. I also accept that there always were going to be nurses who would be unhappy with their grading. I also accept that there are many who have benefited considerably. If the Minister's brief deals with those issues, I suggest that he puts it aside as there is no dispute between us on these matters.

What we want to debate is not the national dispute but the regrading "shambles" at Greater Glasgow health board, which everyone now accepts was totally out of line with the results of every other health board in the country. While, for example, most health boards put 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. of their ward sisters on a G grade, Greater Glasgow health board had half that number—30 per cent. I accept that absolute comparisons cannot be made, but whatever the differences—there are reasons for differences between boards; they will not all be the same—I am sure that the Minister agrees that the difficulties should not be as big as 30 per cent.

Why was there such a huge discrepancy, which has continued the downward spiral of morale and despair in the health board area? I believe that it is due to a combination of incompetence and indifference, fuelled by a drive for cheapness that pervades the health board from top to bottom. No one can escape the blame, and I am surprised that the Minister—who is normally free with his condemnation has been so remarkably silent on this case.

Before considering the events in detail, may I tell the Minister that I was forewarned of what was likely to happen. Several senior members of the Health Service in Scotland, centrally involved with the implementation of the gradings, told me that what Greater Glasgow health board was doing was a disgrace. Those people are closer to the Minister than they are to me, so he must have been aware of the problem. Why did he not step in sooner to rectify the position? Why did he wait until the shambles had broken? The Minister bears some responsibility, too.

The gradings were announced on 11 November, one day after the Govan by-election. Paid-up members of the conspiracy theory would make great play of that, but I shall pass over it for the moment. I was prepared for some dissatisfaction, but not for the overwhelming anger that followed the gradings. Rather than going round stirring up trouble, the trade unions were trying to keep it as low as possible. I attended many meetings where union representatives, especially those from the Royal College of Nursing, were taken to task by their members and told that they had better adopt a more positive and militant approach.

[Mr. Sam Galbraith]

Instead of responding to what was clearly a shambolic injustice, Greater Glasgow health board compounded its error when it said in a press release on Monday 14 November:

"We are completely satisfied that the gradings have been awarded fairly and that the decisions were taken by professionals. Any apparent anomalies can be accounted for quite simply."

That is a sign of the board's utter incompetence on this matter. Not only did the board get it wrong in the first place, but it then refused to admit it. The phrase "any apparent anomalies" means no sister in a theatre suite getting a G grade, no maternity sister in a labour suite getting a G grade and some single ward sisters being given an F grade. They were not apparent anomalies; they were anomalies. We are here tonight to try to discover why they occurred.

On 14 November, the general manager said that he was happy that a "professional and fair" clinical grading exercise had been carried out. Clearly, the Minister was not, because on 16 November he met representatives of the RCN and the Royal College of Midwives and, in what for him was a fairly reticent interview, he hung out the Greater Glasgow health board to dry. I imagine that the telephones were buzzing, because by the following morning, without any appeals, suddenly the apparent anomaly that had resulted in all sisters in operating suites being given F grades was rectified. Suddenly this "fair" clinical grading exercise was crumbling.

Perhaps the sudden turnround was also because I and my colleagues were due to meet representatives of the health board that day. At that meeting, we were amazed by their ignorance of the regrading, although the complacency and contempt that they usually display and that got them into trouble in the first place was missing.

At that meeting we raised with the board what the Minister will agree was the crux of the dispute—the Nick Gurney letter from the Department of Health on 18 August 1988, especially the last paragraph on the second page, which concerns the grading of sisters who work in accident and emergency departments, theatres, delivery suites and intensive care units, including neonatal units. It states:

"We would expect a significant proportion of such sisters to be graded at G or above."

When we asked health board representatives about the letter, their initial response was that they knew nothing of it. Then they admitted that they knew something about it, but it did not apply to Scotland. But when we pushed them a dispute arose among the members present as to whether it applied to Scotland. I know for a fact that health boards were instructed on this matter by the Department, yet the Greater Glasgow health board chose to ignore those instructions. Perhaps the Minister will let us know why.

Evasions and half truths from the Greater Glasgow health board are unacceptable. The general manager then stepped in to tell us that the letter was to trade unions and not to health boards. I disabused him of that, and I am sure that the Minister has done likewise. I am sure also that he will agree that his ignorance and incompetence in this matter are breathtaking.

The Greater Glasgow health board officials then met representatives of the Royal College of Nursing and the midwives in London on 22 November, following which, without recourse to normal appeals procedures, major concessions were made, mostly relating to the G2 classification contained in the Gurney letter. The apparent anomalies that were originally talked about, which could be accounted for quite simply, were reversed.

Although the issue over the Gurney letter was clearly incompetence by the Greater Glasgow health board, there is a more sinister element in this dispute, which brings me back to what I was told by those close to the Minister—that what Greater Glasgow health board was trying to do was a disgrace, because it was trying to make the exercise as cheap as possible. In other words, it was finance-led.

The Minister will have been apprised of the minute from the health board of 28 June 1988, item 73, headed "Clinical Grading Review", which states:

". . . the General Manager explained that until such time as the Scottish Home and Health Department advise of the financial parameters within which the Board should carry out the review, no substantive progress could be made with the Review."

Why could no progress be made? I can interpret that passage in no other way than that the whole exercise was to be finance-led. If not, why wait to see how much money the health board was being given? Incidentally, it also seems that Greater Glasgow health board did not believe the Minister's assurances on funding. As the Minister will remember, on three separate occasions beginning in May, he reassured me that the award would be fully funded. Clearly Mr. Laurence Peterken did not believe him.

The cynical delay, waiting for the "financial parameters", then led to a rushed exercise which has further contributed to the shambles and once again confirms my charge of incompetence.

I am sure that the Minister will agree—he has implicitly accepted it by his actions of 16 November, when he met the royal colleges—that Greater Glasgow health board has managed this whole affair badly. It has been a mixture of meanness, incompetence, evasion, with a not inconsiderable ingredient of spite.

It is symptomatic of the working of the board. It is a board in which management does not ignore advice, it simply never asks for it. It has a management totally isolated from its staff, closeted in distant offices, paralysed and unable to make decisions other than those related to financial cuts. In Glasgow we do not ask what the decision will be; we ask when, if ever, it will be made. It has produced a health board of low morale and accumulated despair which lacks any sense of direction. I fear the solutions to it will have to be drastic, and I shall return to them in the new year.

Meanwhile, I ask the Minister to set up a full inquiry into the running of Greater Glasgow health board that will take as its starting point the nurses' regrading.

We are entitled to know who was responsible for ignoring Government advice contained in the Nick Gurney letter of 18 August, why it was ignored, and what action should be taken to prevent such an event occurring again.

That inquiry should go right to the top, because the whole ethos and practice of a health board is determined by its general manager. If he says that money comes first, to ingratiate themselves, those under him will naturally be keen to follow his philosophy. When that happens, cash always comes before care and money before medicine. It is

a practice that we have to stop, and I can think of nowhere better for initiating the process than in the Greater Glasgow health board.

11.58 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Do I understand that the Minister has agreed that there should be an intervention at this time?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Yes, I have, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. McAvoy: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) for allowing me some of his valuable time in this Adjournment debate. I also acknowledge and appreciate the Minister's co-operation.

I associate myself with my hon. Friend's remarks about Greater Glasgow health board. I was one of the party of hon. Members at the meeting with the board and I confirm my hon. Friend's account. Along with everyone else, I welcome a relaxation of the board's intransigent attitude, but it is not negative to examine why this situation arose in the first place. I accept that it was always going to be a difficult exercise, but Greater Glasgow health board exacerbated a sensitive issue by inept handling.

Rutherglen maternity hospital is situated in my constituency and many of my constituents are employed there in various capacities. All who work there are dedicated to their jobs and I can testify to the standard of service there as I am an expectant father. My first two sons, Thomas and Michael, were born in Bellshill maternity hospital, my third son in Calderbank and my fourth son, Brian, in Rutherglen. He is a true Ruglonian, having been born within the boundaries of the royal burgh of Rutherglen. So I am not speaking in the abstract about the hospital.

When the regradings were issued, many of the midwifery sisters were graded F—despite the Gurney letter which specifically stated of sisters who work in delivery suites:

"we would expect a significant proportion of such sisters to be graded G or above."

The position has been largely rectified, with many midwifery sisters now graded G.

I will never forget the distress of those sisters and their feeling of outrage. They felt that their whole worth was being questioned. No employer, never mind a health board employer, should drive employees to such a state of mind. It was disgraceful.

There was also potential for division between people who take great pride in working harmoniously. Most of us believe that harmony and co-operation in a hospital staff is an essential ingredient in the standard of care provided. Without being vindictive, I suggest that any individual or organisation causing potential damage to the morale of such a key work force as nurses deserves the severest public stricture.

I certainly have no desire to intervene in negotiations between work force and management, but I must alert the Minister to the position of those working at staff midwife grade at Rutherglen maternity hospital. Too many staff midwives have been graded E, despite the fact that they do the same sort of tasks as some sisters. That has not been recognised and there is a need for more staff midwives at that hospital to be graded F. That will merely reflect the experience of those extremely valuable people.

I strongly support my hon. Friend's call for a full inquiry into the running of Greater Glasgow health board with particular emphasis on its handling of the nurses' regrading exercise. It is a public body, subject to public scrutiny, and it should be fully accountable to the public.

12.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I am grateful that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) has given me this opportunity to put on record the substantial improvements in nurses' pay and conditions which have been introduced under this Government. This year's pay settlement is the highest the nursing profession has ever had. It is in marked contrast to the treatment nurses received under the policies of the Labour Government, when in the 1970s nurses' pay fell in real terms. In the five years between 1974 and 1979, Labour cut nurses' pay in four of them; in the financial year 1976-77, a real terms cut of over 10 per cent. was imposed, and over the period as a whole, nurses' pay fell in real terms by 21 per cent.

Contrast those figures with what has happened since 1979. In this period, nurses' pay has gone up by 45 per cent. in real terms. In recognition of the special position of nurses, their dedication to patients and their stand against strike action, the Government set up an independent review body to determine their pay fairly and to ensure that their loyalty was not traded on or taken advantage of. The Government have accepted all five of the review body's awards and have funded over 90 per cent. of the cost of those awards. The current award—the biggest of all—has been funded in full, with an extra £1 billion of public money. That is an achievement matched by no previous Government and reflects the underlying strength of an economy which permits such massive investment in service to the public.

Despite all the claims to the contrary, substantial pay increases have been awarded at every grade of nursing. For nursing auxiliaries going to the basic scale of the new structure, increases in the range of 7·6 to 9·5 per cent. have been awarded. These are substantial increases in real terms. Those auxiliaries whose jobs have merited the higher B grade will receive increases between 19·1 and 33·1 per cent., which in cash terms is between £1,120 and £1,510.

Enrolled nurses have seen their pay and prospects improve out of all recognition. Those on scale C have received increases of 7·1 per cent. to 11·6 per cent., but almost half have gone to the higher grade of D, with increases of £1,450 to £1,775, taking them to a scale ranging from £8,025 to £9,200. A number have even attained grade E——

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether the Minister was misinformed about the title of the Adjournment debate. He has been talking for about five minutes, and he has not mentioned the Greater Glasgow health board.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate.

Mr. Forsyth: I shall be coming to the position of the health board. If the hon. Gentleman is representative of the courtesy that is shown by his party, I shall know in future not to be accommodating when his hon. Friends wish to contribute to Adjournment debates. I have given some of my time, and I am trying to cover the ground.

The regrading exercise has not been confined to pay increases, important though those are. The new structure is the greatest change in the nursing profession since the National Health Service began. This change is something which the Royal College of Nursing acknowledges as having been needed these past 20 years. The previous structure had become archaic and no longer provided the career structure necessary to motivate nurses to remain on clinical work looking after patients. Nor did the old grades reward those with the most onerous duties and responsibilities.

Mr. Galbraith: Did not the Minister listen to the debate?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman asks whether I listened to the debate. I had the opportunity to read his speech earlier today, because he released it, with gross discourtesy to the House, without embargo to the press. It was covered in the newspapers in Scotland today. I have had every opportunity to study the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

The new structure was born out of two and a half years of negotiations between unions and management, and painstaking analysis of job contents right across the clinical spectrum. In view of the many misleading comments of late in the media, I think that it is right to re-emphasise that the structure has been agreed nationally not only oy the Royal Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery and by the Health Visitors' Association but by the trade unions, including COHSE and NUPE. However, COHSE and NUPE would appear to have failed to inform their members of what they had agreed to and to have used the disappointment and uncertainty among some to create an atmosphere of unhappiness and unrest.

It is disappointing that the hon. Member and his party have not condemned the actions of COHSE and NUPE. We are dealing with a national agreement to which they were full parties, a pay structure recommended by an independent review body, and a regrading exercise for which there are established grievance procedures.

Against that background, I turn to the grading outcome under the Greater Glasgow health board, to which the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden has drawn attention. Throughout the regrading exercise, I have made it clear that individual nurse regradings are within the framework of the national agreement for health boards to decide and are not matters in which I would wish to intervene. I have kept to that policy. At no time, contrary to what the hon. Gentleman has asserted, have either I or the Scottish Home and Health Department issued directives to boards about the grading of particular posts; nor have any quotas been imposed. That extends also to finance. There has been no attempt to cap the award by limiting cash allocations. Managers were advised that money was not to be a determinant of grade. The fact that additional allocations had to be made to cover the cost of grades awarded proves that managers took this message to heart.

Greater Glasgow health board is the largest single employer of nurses in Great Britain. It had to regrade over 12,000 posts, in terms of whole-time equivalent, on a consistent basis, in its area while recognising that the grading outcome should reflect differences in working practices between hospitals and specialties. No mechanistic approach could be adopted, and, in common with every other health board in Scotland, Greater Glasgow assessed the posts of its nursing staff and evaluated their job contents against the grading criteria. The gradings which resulted, while producing a structure similar to those in other parts of the country, of necessity reflected local working practices.

In the case of Greater Glasgow these included two significant factors influencing the grading of hospital sisters. The first of these was the fact that the board employed a greater than average number of senior nurses. This meant that the degree to which responsibility for ward management was delegated to sister level was probably less than in other parts of the country.

Secondly, and more important, Glasgow had a significantly higher proportion of two-sister wards than any other board in Scotland. In these, the board felt unable genuinely to identify at 1 April which post was designated to be in charge, carry continuing responsibility and so merit the higher grade of G. I understand that 70 per cent. of Greater Glasgow's wards are staffed by two or more sisters.

Not surprisingly, these factors resulted in Glasgow assimilating a higher proportion of its hospital sisters to grade F than other Scottish boards. As a result, its grading profile for assimilation of staff, while almost identical to that for Scotland as a whole in terms of the proportion of staff on grades A to E and H to I, showed a higher proportion of staff on grade F and a lower proportion on G than Scotland as a whole. In Scotland the percentage on F was expected to be 7 per cent., but for the Greater Glasgow health board it was 10 per cent., and for G, the proportion for Scotland was 13 per cent. and for the Greater Glasgow health board it was 9 per cent. These differences could, as I have already explained, be attributed to previous staffing practices. The hon. Member makes much of Greater Glasgow's apparent failure to apply management guidance on the use of the G2 classification. In fact, unfortunately for him, the majority of ward sisters assimilated to the G grade related to the use of G2.

In turn, this meant that Greater Glasgow had to consider restructuring more posts than other boards so as to create a G post in each ward. I would emphasise that, by proceeding in this way, the board was sticking strictly to the terms of the national agreement to which COHSE and NUPE were parties. There was no question of the board attempting to restrict regradings artificially as at 1 April, and, by promoting people at a later date, to make savings from its allocation through not having to pay backdated arrears of salary.

On 16 November, I met representatives, as the hon. Gentleman said, of the Royal Colleges of Nursing and of Midwives. They expressed three main areas of concern about Greater Glasgow's handling of the regrading exercise. They were not convinced that an award of grade F had been appropriate in a number of single-sister wards. They were concerned that large-scale restructuring of sister posts should not commence in advance of appeals being resolved. They felt that the initial review of cases in

which staff had notified an intention to appeal could be a hindrance to the swift processing of appeals unless general managers were involved and powers of decision delegated.

These concerns were transmitted to officials of the Greater Glasgow health board by the Scottish Home and Health Department. As a consequence, board officials came to London so as to have the earliest possible meeting with the royal colleges. Following negotiations, the board made public its intention to review its policies on sister regrading and to award the grade of G as from 1 April to day sisters in single-sister wards. This has resulted in the proportion of staff on grade F reducing to 7 per cent. and those on grade G increasing to 12 per cent. These are almost identical to the Scottish proportions in these grades. So the hon. Gentleman's assertion that Greater Glasgow's result is out of line with the rest of Scotland is quite incorrect.

Once restructuring is carried out, these proportions will become 5 per cent. and 14 per cent. respectively. While I recognise the crucial role of sisters, the fact is that the change which has brought Greater Glasgow's profile almost exactly into line with the national average affects about 200 posts out of the 12,000 or so regraded by Greater Glasgow. Less than half of these, agreed with the RCN and RCM, are additional G2 posts, of which the hon. Member has made so much.

The board has also taken steps to ensure that its initial review of intentions to appeal can be conducted swiftly and that decisions can be taken at unit level through the involvement of general managers.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) asked me about midwives. They have done extremely well from regrading in Greater Glasgow and in the rest of Scotland. All staff midwives have, in both cases, gone immediately to the higher grades, with increases of 23 per cent. or more. In Greater Glasgow, I understand that about 140 midwives—78 per cent.—will have moved immediately to the higher grades with increases of 16 per cent. or more. In Scotland as a whole, the proportion going to the higher grades is again around three quarters.

The nursing staff of Greater Glasgow health board has been treated equitably. Inevitably in an exercise of this scope and complexity, some mistakes are bound to have been made, but adequate appeals machinery is available to correct them. Throughout this exercise, Greater Glasgow has acted with care and has also demonstrated its willingness to listen to responsible representations which, regretfully, have not come from the hon. Gentleman, and to react to them where appropriate. Equally, it has quite properly declined to deal with trade unions that have used industrial action as an instrument for putting pressure on management.

Already, the Royal Colleges of Nursing and of Midwives and the board have agreed changes as a result of calm and objective discussion. The so-called dispute has been largely manufactured by COHSE and NUPE which have even put patients into the front line in their attempts to disrupt the board's management of its affairs. Had they behaved sensibly and not sought confrontation, their members' interests would have been much better served. The hon. Gentleman is therefore raking over old coals. I do not believe that he has the interests of the nursing profession in mind in doing so. Indeed, given the record of the Labour party in government and the 21 per cent. cut in pay which nurses suffered between 1974 and 1979, I can only assume that his motives are to stir up unrest deliberately at the very time when agreement is being reached in order to bury the past.

The Government have, however, kept faith with the profession and have honoured their commitments to it. As I said at the beginning of my speech, the result is that pay has risen by 45 per cent. in real terms since 1979 and nurses have a career structure negotiated with the professional bodies and trade unions which represent them, which should serve them and the Health Service well in the future.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister failed to answer a number of points, and was his usual ideological and spiteful self. Can he tell us why the Greater Glasgow health board graded the sisters in operating suites on the F grade which is contrary to the Nick Gurney letter of 18 August? That was centrally discussed by the implementation group in the Minister's Department, yet Greater Glasgow health board ignored it. I asked about the number of double-sister wards in the health boards, and he said that the information was not available centrally. It is nice that he has suddenly found the information for the Greater Glasgow health board. Can he tell us what it is for the rest of the country?

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 22 December 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Vietnamese Refugees (Hong Kong)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

9.34 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): We meet this morning in the shadow of an appalling air disaster that has shocked us all. Perhaps 300 people have been killed. In the 13 years since the fall of Saigon, an estimated 300,000 people have been killed or drowned trying to flee from Vietnam. A sudden disaster captures our imagination and compassion but a long-term human tragedy produces indifference and neglect. Therefore, it is appropriate that we should begin our Christmas Adjournment debates by discussing the plight of some of the most unfortunate people for whom the House bears ultimate responsibility —the Vietnamese boat people who are currently sheltering in Hong Kong.

Earlier this year, the Hong Kong Government, for whom we are ultimately responsible, changed the rules for those boat people trying to escape from the appalling conditions in their own country. There was some relaxation in the conditions under which boat people who had arrived in Hong Kong before midnight on 16 June this year were held. In the past, thousands of those detainees were kept in small, closed camps, some of which I have visited. The camps are clean and the detainees are surprisingly healthy. There is less crime than in an average English village. Children are taught to read and write and paid work is available to many of the inmates. There is also a total lack of privacy and freedom. For years, large families have been expected to live in a space no larger than a dining room table—or the Table on which the Dispatch Boxes rest. Families do not have floor space for themselves. They are often stacked in three tiers of bunks so that three families are literally living on top of each other.

Until 16 June this year, detainees were allowed out only to go to hospital. That meant that some children of school age had never been outside the camp site, which comprised one or two acres. Six months ago we relaxed the rules for the people already in the detention camps. The gates were at least partially opened but, at the same time, we imposed new, even stricter rules for boat people who had arrived after the deadline. Those who arrived after the deadline would not be looked on as prima facie refugees unless they could show that they had fled from fear of individual persecution because of their political or religious belief. The others would be regarded as unwelcome economic migrants. We seem to have signed an agreement with the Vietnamese authorities which covers the repatriation to Vietnam of those so-called unwelcome economic migrants.

I know many of the men and women who devised and administer that policy and they are humane and honourable people. The staff of the camps that I visited seemed to be kindly and are clearly on good terms with the detainees. The civil servants responsible for the camps seemed to be sympathetic individuals. I know some of the members of the refugee committee of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. They are kind and caring people who are caught in an impossible situation. Those who have known the Foreign Secretary, who bears the final responsiblity for this, for many years know that there is not a cruel or wicked bone in his body. The House will know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary who will reply to the debate is one of the kindest and most generous of men. Yet the policy that we have devised is shameful. I am ashamed of it, and in years to come historians will judge that we should be ashamed of our handling of this human tragedy.

A few weeks ago the press was full of stories about the findings of a commission that investigated allegations that Harold Macmillan and others were responsible for callously repatriating thousands of white Russians and Yugloslavs in 1945. That repatriation turned out to be a tragedy which later provoked recrimination, but our policy of repatriating the Vietnamese has provoked hardly a murmur of protest. To some extent, our consciences have been salved by the reluctance of the Vietnamese authorities to take back anyone who does not volunteer to return.

Of course, there are good reasons why any sensible person wants to discourage the flow of people from Vietnam. Hong Kong has one of the highest population densities in the world. It should not be asked to take in tens of thousands of additional refugees from Vietnam. Yet the potential flow is enormous. In the first half of 1979, boat people were arriving in Hong Kong at the rate of 10,000 a month, and there is no doubt that hundreds of thousands of people in Vietnam would be prepared to undergo the hardships and risks of a boat trip to Hong Kong if they thought that it would lead to a quick resettlement in the west.

The problem for Hong Kong has been increased by the fact that many of the countries that took large numbers of Vietnamese refugees have begun to show compassion fatigue. Some countries have absorbed very large numbers. In the 13 years since the fall of Saigon, America has taken nearly 1 million, and they are beginning to make an important contribution to American life at all levels. Three other countries—Canada, Australia, and France —have each taken more than 100,000 Vietnamese refugees. Britain has taken more than 20,000, mostly from Hong Kong, and I pay tribute to the many charities and individuals who have helped the Vietnamese refugees to settle into the mainstream of British life.

But there is an increased reluctance among the main receiver countries to keep their doors open. When the Hong Kong refugee rules were changed in June, there was a hope that potential host countries would respond to the new tougher entry rules by offering to take many more of the 16,000 people who already had prima facie status and were established in the camps. That does not seem to have happened. The Hong Kong authorities reckon that during the next 12 months only 2,500 camp inmates will be offered resettlement. The authorities in Hong Kong and many refugee organisations believe that if we took another 2,000 refugees other countries would open their gates and the old refugee problem would be solved. I do not believe that that will happen. Although our present quota of 20 refugees a month is pathetically low—if my hon. Friend the Minister

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

could announce an increase, I should be the first to cheer —the solution to the problem is not resettlement in the west. A well-publicised transfer of families from Hong Kong to Britain could start the rush again.

Should we acquiesce in the proposed policy of repatriating most of the 10,000 boat people who have arrived in Hong Kong since June, and should we repatriate the bulk of those who will continue to try to reach Hong Kong? At present, pushing the boat people back to Vietnam is as repulsive as handing back to the East German authorities anyone who manages to get over the Berlin wall. There is the problem of punishment. Earlier this month, a notable television programme entitled "Boat People go Home", which was part of the ITV "This Week" series, showed that ordinary people who are caught trying to leave Vietnam are subjected to interrogation, re-education and sometimes imprisonment for up to 12 years.

The Vietnamese Government may change their policy. Perhaps perestroika will come to Vietnam. I gather that the Vietnamese phrase for perestroika is "doi moi". Perhaps the crushing burden of taxation in a country where the average income barely exceeds £2 a week will be reduced. Perhaps there will be a sensible agricultural pricing system and perhaps runaway inflation will be checked. Perhaps the Vietnamese authorities will relax their political grip and will not penalise any returning boat people. But the good sense and good faith of the Vietnamese Government must be tested much more strenuously before it is safe to think about repatriation.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give a pledge that no one will be repatriated to Vietnam against his will. I ask him to give that pledge not only for next year but for the lifetime of this Parliament. I also ask for an assurance that no pressure will be put on boat people in Hong Kong to volunteer to return.

If the West is suffering from terminal compassion fatigue, if Hong Kong is too crowded and if repatriation is unacceptable, what should we do? The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees favours refugee resettlement in the general area from which the refugees come. That is a sensible policy. There is space in parts of the Philippines and in Borneo, and there are many other underpopulated areas of south-east Asia where, if there was the political will, the boat people could be resettled temporarily for, say, five years while we see whether the Vietnamese Government become more tolerant and more tolerable. Of course, neither the Indonesian Government nor the Government of the Philippines will welcome penniless refugees in large numbers and give them land and a permanent home. It would be much more acceptable if an international consortium agreed to take a temporary lease on camp sites in the Philippines and Borneo and guaranteed that no financial burden would fall on the host country.

Hong Kong should not be asked to pay more than a small part of the cost of any temporary relocation of refugees in the area. I note that when the rules were changed in June, the influential *Far East Economic Review* acidly noted that support for mismanaged local banks was costing Hong Kong taxpayers more than the £15 million a year spent on refugee support. We should be major contributors to any regional temporary relocation project.

There is considerable all-party support for an increase in our aid budget, and if one is made I should give high priority to more help for refugees. Help should also be given by Taiwan, the administration of which is wealthy enough to play a major role in regional aid. Above all, help should be given by Japan—its business did well out of the Vietnam war—which has made no worthwhile contribution to solving the refugee problem.

I note that an international conference that will be concerned mainly with the Vietnamese refugee problem will meet next year. We must try to achieve multilateral support for temporary local resettlement and should be prepared to play a part with financial and administrative support. At Christmas time, we should hold out hope to these wretched people and not threaten to send them back against their will. I cannot support a policy based on detention and repatriation of brave people who have already suffered so much.

9.51 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I congratulate my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) on securing this Adjournment debate and am grateful to him for allowing me to make a brief contribution on a topic in which I have taken an interest for many years.

We are discussing some of the original boat people who went to Hong Kong 10 or more years ago, and we remember the wave of sympathy for them in this country. Most of them have been resettled in different parts of the world, a number of them here. Several thousand have remained in Hong Kong for up to 10 years and their position is hopeless; they have tried to resettle in different parts of the world without success. We are taking 20 people a month, but they must already have a family connection in Britain. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider opening our doors a little wider and to persuade the Home Office to allow a few more refugees to come here, albeit at a gentle pace. If we were prepared to take a few more refugees, perhaps we could persuade other countries to do the same. As the country ultimately responsible for Hong Kong, others look to us to take the lead. I hope that special consideration will be given, not to the recent economic refugees but the original political refugees.

The status of those individuals apart, we have a moral obligation to the people and Government of Hong Kong. It is one of the most densely populated areas of the world, yet without question the Hong Kong people took in the refugees; not a single one has been turned away. The assumption was that Hong Kong would be a staging post and that the refugees would be moved on. Hong Kong took the refugees despite the fact that many families there have friends and relatives in mainland China who would like to go to Hong Kong but are not allowed to do so. With open arms, the Hong Kong people accepted the refugees, but Hong Kong is still having to bear the burden, expense and sheer discomfort of having to cope with them. Other considerations apart, we have a strong obligation to the people and Government of Hong Kong to ease the burden that they have shouldered for so long.

9.54 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): Almost a year ago to the day, in the Christmas Adjournment debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and I discussed the plight of the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. Today's debate provides a further timely opportunity for the House to review the important developments of the past 12 months. I am most grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) for their continuing and constructive interest in this extremely sensitive subject.

For reasons of which hon. Members are well aware, the problem of the boat people is extraordinarily complex. It is tied to the wider problems of the region and is a difficult and sensitive issue. I assure my hon. Friends that we and the Government of Hong Kong are very concerned about it and attach high priority to solving it.

It may be helpful briefly to summarise the developments of the past 12 months and the steps that we and the Hong Kong authorities have taken to deal with them. As the House will be aware, there has been a sharp and dramatic increase in the number of boat people arriving in Hong Kong since mid-1987. Between mid-1987 and mid-1988, the boat people population in Hong Kong rose from 8,000 to more than 25,000. In the first half of 1988 alone, there were more than 9,000 arrivals—three times more than in 1987, four times more than 1986, and eight times more than 1985.

In addition to that massive numerical increase, it became increasingly clear that there had been a change in the background and motivation of those arriving in Hong Kong. The overwhelming majority of recent arrivals were farmers and fishermen from north Vietnam. They were seeking a better life in the West and not leaving to escape political and religious persecution, so they could not meet the internationally accepted criteria for refugee status. Such people stood little or no chance of being resettled in the West—resettlement countries understandably choose to give priority to genuine refugees from other parts of the world—and their arrival in Hong Kong almost overwhelmed the already stretched reception facilities in the territory. It also made it more difficult for genuine refugees in Hong Kong to find resettlement places elsewhere. The major resettlement countries began to question the wisdom of resettlement programmes that appeared only to stimulate ever greater numbers of departures from Vietnam.

By June this year, it had become clear that the burden on Hong Kong had become intolerable and that things could not go on as they were. It was no longer fair or realistic to pretend that all those who arrived in Hong Kong by boat had the prospect of automatic resettlement in the West, however long that might take. It would have been a cruel deception to offer those who plainly did not qualify as refugees the prospect of a future that did not and could not exist; nor could a civilised Government leave such people to the mercy of the sea.

Against that background and with our support, the Hong Kong Government introduced a new policy on 16 June. From that date all new arrivals were to be screened to distinguish genuine refugees from the rest. The screening procedures are in accordance with established international criteria and have been fully endorsed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR officials are able to monitor screening and give advice and assistance when appropriate. The procedures are, and are seen to be, fair and objective.

I assure the House that the Hong Kong authorities are proceeding with screening carefully and thoroughly. Results so far have identified 38 genuine refugees—slightly less than 10 per cent. of those screened so far. The rest have been screened out as failing to meet the relevant international criteria. Those screened in—those accepted as genuine refugees—are accommodated in camps to await resettlement. Those screened out are given a temporary base in Hong Kong until suitable arrangements can be made for their future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham repeated his thoughtful suggestions about providing temporary relocation elsewhere in the region. We have considered his proposals carefully and taken soundings on the practicality of the idea of what one may loosely call a "haven" for Vietnamese refugees elsewhere in the region. All our research leads us to conclude that no country in the area would be receptive to the idea of accommodating large numbers of refugees from Hong Kong. It would amount to the creation within that country's territory of what, in practice, would be an isolation centre for stateless persons. We do not think such an approach would be acceptable. We have always believed that other long-term solutions must be sought. It is for that reason that the Hong Kong Government introduced their new policy earlier this year.

My hon. Friends have expressed concern about the conditions in the camps in Hong Kong. That is understandable, but we should not forget that the Hong Kong Government have had to accommodate 25,000 boat people, including over 17,000 new arrivals in the past year. The Hong Kong Government attach great importance, as we do, to ensuring that conditions in the camps are as good as possible in the difficult circumstances. They have paid close attention to the safety aspects and to the provision of adequate food and medical facilities. This has been, and still is, as my hon. Friends have recognised, a major strain on the territory's resources. But the authorities have coped magnificently. I am sure that the House will join me in paying tribute to the Hong Kong authorities for the efforts that they have made.

In parallel with the introduction of screening, the Hong Kong Government announced that the closed centres for those with refugee status would be liberalised. As the House knows, that process is already underway. The new screening policy has made this possible, because it is no longer necessary to have restrictive conditions in the refugee camps as a deterrent to further departures from Vietnam. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will run a new open camp for all those in Hong Kong with refugee status. It is currently under construction. In the meantime, the refugees have access to outside employment and increased educational training facilities. The Government welcome the role that the UNHCR is playing in Hong Kong. On 3 October, we announced that we would be making a contribution of £1 million to UNHCR's operations in the territory.

Since September the flow of arrivals in Hong Kong has diminished significantly. That is encouraging. It shows that the message of the new screening policy is getting across in Vietnam, which was intended. It also suggests that the Vietnamese authorities have been playing their part in taking effective measures to bring the outflow of

[Mr. Timothy Eggar]

people to an end. We are far from complacent because the autumn and winter months are traditionally the period of relatively few new arrivals. We are therefore monitoring the situation closely.

Those who do not meet the criteria for refugee status cannot be permanently accommodated in the small and overcrowded territory of Hong Kong—I think that everyone recognises that. It would not be right either to contemplate the indefinite detention of such people and their children. Their future can lie only in their own country. It must therefore be right to seek satisfactory arrangements, in consultation with the Vietnamese authorities, for their return, without fear of punishment or persecution of any kind.

It is with that objective that we have held two rounds of talks with the Vietnamese authorities about the future of those boat people who do not qualify as refugees. We have insisted on—and, I am delighted to say, obtained—assurances from the Vietnamese that all returnees will be treated humanely and will not be punished. We have also secured the agreement of the Vietnamese that the UNHCR should monitor the observance of these undertakings and the reintegration of the returnees into Vietnam. These are important developments which I am sure will command a general welcome. They provide the basis for a viable future for those for whom no other realistic option exists.

Several hundred boat people in Hong Kong have already expressed a wish to return to Vietnam. The UNHCR is taking charge of the practical arrangements for that. I am pleased to confirm to the House that a memorandum of understanding between the UNHCR and the Vietnamese authorities was signed on 13 December. It represents a significant step forward. We have indeed come a long way. Until recently, the Vietnamese authorities would have been resolutely opposed to the signing of such a document. It is as a result of our diplomatic efforts, the impact of Hong Kong's new screening policy, and the patient and exemplary work of the UNHCR that such a memorandum has been made possible. The memorandum clearly provides for the monitoring by the UNHCR of the arrangements for the return and reintegration of the individuals concerned. It provides also for financial assistance to help them to pick up the threads of their former life.

We hope and believe that the success of these arrangements will, over time, serve to encourage other non-refugees in Hong Kong to opt voluntarily to return. We hope that they will make that choice as it becomes clear that they will not be subject to punishment in Vietnam and as the inevitable logic of their situation sinks in. We are convinced that a solution on these lines is both realistic and humane: realistic because there is no practicable alternative, and humane because it is conditional on there being no ill-treatment of those who go back.

In response to a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, I assure him that we would not repatriate a single boat person to Vietnam if we were not satisfied that such people would be properly treated on their return and would not be punished. We shall be in close consultation with the UNHCR to make sure that the terms of the memorandum that has been agreed with the authorities in Vietnam is adhered to extremely closely.

Sir Philip Goodhart: Will my hon. Friend go a step further and say that, while the monitoring takes place next year, no Vietnamese boat people will be sent back against their will?

Mr. Eggar: We are not talking about compulsion at this stage. We envisage a gradual return by people on a voluntary basis. It is critical that the monitoring process is successful and that people are reintegrated. It is also critical that the news that the Vietnamese authorities are abiding by the letter and spirit of the memorandum signed by the UNHCR seeps back to Hong Kong so that those who have not been given refugee status can feel confident that they will receive a proper welcome when they return to Vietnam and that they will not be persecuted.

My hon. Friends mentioned the resettlement of the boat people in Hong Kong who do not enjoy refugee status. It is critical that those people find homes in the major resettlement countries as soon as possible. In the meantime, as I have already said, the camps in which they are being accommodated are being opened up and a new camp is being constructed.

There are now more than 15,000 Vietnamese in Hong Kong who are recognised as refugees. Following the change in policy introduced on 16 June, they represent what is essentially a residual problem. Of the more recent arrivals, few seem likely to meet the established international criteria to be considered as refugees. I have already given the House the figures for the screening so far.

We have played a major part over the years in resettling Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, despite the heavy immigration pressures that we face from many other sources. We are deeply grateful to other Governments who are continuing to make their contribution by resettling substantial numbers from Hong Kong. We believe that the time has come for a major international effort to tackle the residual problem. I am able to announce to the House that we are prepared, in principle, to contribute to that effort by taking a further 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over two to three years, provided that other resettlement countries are prepared to contribute commensurately. The 1,000 would include relatives of Vietnamese already here and others with the potential quickly to become self-sufficient in the United Kingdom. They would also include some of those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst who have been in the camps for a long time and have not yet been accepted elsewhere.

We shall do everything possible to ensure that additional refugees are resettled in a way that does not add to the considerable pressure on housing resources in certain urban areas in Britain. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will be considering with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and others how rehousing problems can be avoided.

We shall enter into immediate consultations with the other resettlement Governments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We shall make it clear that there must be a genuine international effort. We shall look to other Governments to state clearly their readiness to match what we intend to do by accepting substantial additional numbers of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. We hope that the other resettlement countries will respond generously, as they have in the past. Depending on the response that we receive, and on achieving a

solution to the problem of pressure on housing resources in certain areas, we shall be ready to go ahead with our new plans.

I reassure the House that we shall continue to devote all our efforts, in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and in Hong Kong, to tackling all aspects of this complex and tragic problem. In doing so, we shall continue to work closely with the Hong Kong authorities, the UNHCR and the international community. We need a national and international response to the problem.

We are far from complacent about what has been achieved so far and we do not underestimate the difficulties that remain to be resolved for the genuine refugees and those who cannot be accepted as refugees.

This short debate has been useful in giving the House an opportunity to make its views known and I am delighted to have been able to make my announcement. I assure hon. Members that we will continue to listen carefully to the concerns of the House and to those in Hong Kong and elsewhere in this difficult and sensitive area.

Pensioners

10.16 am

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I have on many occasions raised the immense difficulties and indeed misery suffered by pensioners on low incomes during the winter months. The acute problems arise basically because they have insufficient income to heat their accommodation adequately. On countless occasions Labour Members have also raised in the House and elsewhere the hardship of other low-income households which face similar difficulties with winter fuel bills. We believe much more should be done to increase the income of the low paid and ease the lot of the unemployed.

Any gain achieved by today's pensioners will benefit future generations of retired people—at least, I hope so. The Opposition have learnt to be suspicious of the Government. Ministers are keen to promote the myth that pensioners are now so much better off that they require less assistance from the state and less help with their fuel bills.

If my private Member's Bill had become law last year —I was the first in the ballot at the beginning of 1987— pensioners would have had extra financial resources because they would not have had to pay the full television licence fee. They would have had a free licence if my Bill had become law or, if it had been amended, which I was prepared to accept, they would have paid £5, £10 or £20 per year instead of the full sum.

What about the Government's view that pensioners are so much better off? According to the latest information available to the Library, one third of pensioners in Britain live on or below the income support level. Imagine what it must be like to live below the income support level. Such people include those who do not claim income support although they are eligible and those who are denied such support because of their modest—by today's standards —lifetime savings.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that many pensioners who live at such a low standard because of their incomes are so severely and dangerously undernourished that it causes their early death?

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend is right and I shall refer to that aspect later.

Another one third of pensioners live just above income support level, with incomes of between 100 and 140 per cent. of that level. Therefore, virtually two thirds of the pensioners —millions of retired citizens—live in poverty or near poverty. None of us would wish to lead such a life and one can well understand the immense difficulties that so many of them face, especially during the winter months, in trying to keep their homes adequately heated.

Winter, of course, presents the greatest problem with heating bills, especially for those on low incomes. Fuel bills inevitably take a greater proportion of a low income. That is especially so for pensioners, in their 70s or older, who often are housebound during the winter months or have increasing difficulty in getting out during the coldest weather.

We know that under this Government pensions have been increased only in line with inflation. Over the past nine years, gas prices, especially, have been increased deliberately as a result of Government policy. They have increased by more than the rate of inflation. That

[Mr. Winnick]

obviously presents great difficulties for those on low incomes. If pensions had been increased in line with earnings in recent years—after a year or so in office the Government decided to break the link with earnings—the married couple's pension from April 1989 would have been £87·45—£17·65 more than they will receive. A single pensioner would have received from next April £54·75—£11·15 more than he or she will receive.

If pensioners were to receive next April the sums that I have mentioned instead of those that they will actually receive, the extra money would be of considerable help in paying fuel bills and they would be better able adequately to heat their accommodation.

The elderly are most at risk during the winter months. The risks for them are greater than for any other section of the community. We know of the dangers to the elderly of hypothermia. Many experts believe that the official figures represent a substantial understatement of the true number of those who die from hypothermia during the winter. It seems that some doctors take the view that to place the word "hypothermia" on a death certificate is rather like stamping it with the word "neglect", and accordingly are reluctant to do so. Where hypothermia was recorded as the cause of death in 1986 in England and Wales, 83 per cent. of the deceased were over the age of 65 years.

Cold-related deaths are far greater in number than the figures for hypothermia alone. There is some evidence that the percentage of the elderly who die during the winter months in Britain is higher than that in other advanced countries. The following questions must be asked. Are we taking less care of the elderly than do many other European countries? Is insufficient income the reason for the problem? Is there a lack of co-ordinated action, especially for the elderly who are most at risk? Those are worrying matters and should certainly preoccupy the House.

I am sure that everyone accepts that better and more effective insulation is extremely important. I pay tribute to Neighbourhood Energy Action, which has done a first-class job in many localities carrying out draught-proofing and insulation. I understand that such work has been done in about 350,000 homes. One wishes that such organisations had far greater financial resources at their disposal to carry out many other similar activities.

I agree that there is much more to be done to improve insulation and draughtproofing, but, first and foremost, there must be extra income provided for pensioners during the winter months. That is vital for elderly people on small incomes. The Minister, with whom I have no personal quarrel, will explain the Government's line on this issue, which he knows is entirely unsatisfactory to Opposition Members. He will say that provision is made for help with fuel bills during cold spells. He will refer to severe weather payments, which are increasingly seen, and not only by Labour Members, as a farce. Even newspapers that support the Tory cause—*The Sunday Times*, for example—have exposed effectively the number of pensioners who are in the greatest danger during cold spells. That was done during the last cold spell at the beginning of 1987. Attention was drawn to the fact that no extra payment was made available to those at risk.

For the severe weather payment to be triggered, there have to be seven consecutive days during which the average temperature has to fall to freezing point. The 63 weather stations are involved. That is the latest position after the recent changes; changes are made literally every year. Even when those conditions have been met, only pensioners who receive income support can apply for the payment. Moreover, they must have less than £500 of capital. The pensioner has to apply for the payment, and if all the conditions are met he or she will receive the princely sum of £5. I wonder how far £5 goes towards heating a home during a spell of freezing weather. We believe that the payments are a farce. They are inadequate and are nowhere near the amounts that should be available during cold spells.

Heating additions were abolished this year in the change from supplementary benefit to income support, and I have no doubt that the Minister will say that the additions have been replaced by various elements that make up income support. Heating additions, however, as a separate item in a pensioner's income, had the important function of showing clearly the amount that was being provided for heating alone. Such additions could be adjusted quickly if fuel prices increased.

On 8 November, west midlands Labour Members took to Downing street petitions that had been signed by thousands of pensioners calling for an extra £5 a week during the winter months, to be paid especially to pensioners in need. We did not have the pleasure, if that is the right expression, of seeing the Prime Minister at Downing street. The door was open for a few moments. We saw the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, who courteously took the petitions. We have not heard anything further. None of us had the slightest illusion; we knew that the Government would not respond. We did not expect them to do so. Unfortunately, the Government do not show much interest in these problems.

We are about to adjourn for Christmas, and it is fortunate that large numbers of families and individuals have enough money to be able to enjoy the festivities. They will be able adequately to heat their accommodation. A minority may fall into debt, but for many it will be a Christmas without acute financial worry. However, other people in the community—the poorest and others whom I would describe as living at near poverty level, including two thirds of all pensioners as well as some of working age, such as the unemployed and low paid—will find Christmas a difficult period during which to keep warm. They will find it difficult enough to obtain the financial resources for the ordinary necessities of life, let alone any extra money for the holiday.

As I have said before, one of the House's responsibilities is to spotlight those of our fellow citizens who are in acute financial difficulties. Even if we were talking about a small minority, it would be our duty to spotlight their problems. But we are talking about millions of people and millions of pensioners who are in such financial difficulties.

It is a scandal that so many retired people, many of whom served in the war and helped to ensure that the country survived, face a bleak retirement. It is bleak, because they do not have sufficient income. Their state retirement pension is too low, they have not been able to save during their working life and their occupational pension, if they have one, is very small. I have received letters from ex-service men who ask what the sacrifice was

for and whether they served only to be punished in retirement. The Government should have a guilty conscience about the way in which such pensioners are treated.

The Government have been generous to the richest and most prosperous. They were even more generous in this year's Budget. They have shown no reluctance to give to those who need it least, and the rich and the most prosperous should be grateful to the Government. As on other occasions, Opposition Members ask today why the Government cannot be as generous to those in great financial difficulties through no fault of their own.

10.33 am

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): First, I pay tribute to my hon, Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) for applying for the debate and I congratulate him on his success in the ballot. However, I pay tribute to him most of all because of his activities on behalf of senior citizens in Britain. He has campaigned steadfastly for them on a range of issues for many years. It is a great pleasure and honour to support him once again in his endeavours on behalf of our elderly population.

The scale of the problem facing the elderly population can be seen in the recent figures that show how many pensioners there are in the nation. About 18·5 per cent. of the population of Britain is of pensionable age—over 10 million people are pensioners. In the next 40 years, the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to increase by about 80 per cent. An idea of what that means can be obtained if one examines the most recent census figures, which were published on 13 June 1987. One sees that there were 6·876 million women over 60 years of age. That averages out, on my calculations, at 10,578 women over 60 per parliamentary constituency.

There are 5,320,000 women and 3,494,000 men over 65, which works out at 13,560 pensioners per constituency. There are more than 6 million pensioners over the age of 70, which works out at 9,333 per constituency. There are 3·776 million pensioners over the age of 75, which is 5,809 per parliamentary constituency. That gives us some idea of the scale of concern that should be shown by all hon. Members.

I find it shameful that only five hon. Members are present, of whom three hold Government office. The Government have been lucky with the figures. The figures that I have quoted were published in June 1987, and we are lucky because they will remain constant for the next few years. The reason for that is the low birth rate in the 1920s, during the depression, which was caused, again, by Government economic policy. The other factor was that more than 1 million men died in the first world war, fighting to safeguard the nation's interests. That is why we are not faced with an even more horrific problem.

What has the Government's response been? The Opposition are worried by the Government's actions. They have removed the link with earnings or inflation—whichever was higher—which guaranteed pensioners a decent pension in old age. Let us consider the figures. A single person's pension is £41·.15, whereas if the previous link had been retained it would be £50·94. The pension for a married couple is £65·90, whereas it should be £81·55. That is one of the disgraceful changes made since this Government came to office.

Another problem involves cold weather payments and the changes made to such payments under the Social Security Act 1988. The Government have retained the cold weather payment at the miserly amount of £5. That is inadequate, given the cost of fuel. The Government have also inflicted another extraordinarily harsh action on our senior citizens. I represent a coal mining area in which many pensioners are either the widows of coal miners or retired coal miners and they face severe difficulties. Many years ago, it was agreed in the industry that miners would give up a portion of their fuel allowance, which was given as part of their wages throughout the year. Out of their 12 loads of coal a year, two were put into a reserve, which supplied much-needed fuel to pensioners and to the widows of miners. That gift should not fall within the Government's prerogative. It was a gift from working people in the industry to those in need who were, for one reason or another, outside the industry. Through the changes in the supplementary benefit regulations, the Government have inflicted a system that treats that gift from people in work as earnings. As a result, a miner's widow in my constituency who receives winter fuel from the reserve has deductions made from her supplementary benefit. Those deductions accumulate because of the earnings band in which she falls, with the result that her "free" fuel actually costs her money. That is disgraceful.

I have shown that many of the Government's policies do not favour the elderly population. Without a shadow of a doubt, the Minister—like his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when confronted with these questions—will read out a set of facts and figures to show how well off pensioners are, but pensioners do not believe that they are well off, in my constituency or in any other. Many elderly people come to talk to me and they all tell me how badly off they are. The full extent of the problem is evident from the disastrous circumstances of the winter months. During the coming months, thousands of pensioners will die of cold or of illnesses related to it. This winter, at least 750,000—perhaps even 1 million—pensioners will be at risk. Yet the Government have taken no concerted action to try to reverse that dangerous state of affairs.

I should like the Minister to take some positive action today, because there is not much time. I do not expect him to announce that the Government will give free television licences to pensioners, having recognised that televisions are an important means of communication, which pensioners should have in their homes. I do not expect him to announce an enormous increase in pensions. It would be silly even to ask him to do that. Instead, I want him to say that before he and the Prime Minister go on their holidays he will send telexes to all the relevant Government agencies in the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security telling them to be aware of, and be ready to meet, the needs of pensioners during the holiday. I want him to urge the Prime Minister to make a statement before Christmas telling people that they should be aware of pensioners' needs. In that way, pensioners might at least have some comfort and people might be reminded that Christmas is a time of good will, and act accordingly during the holiday period.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North for allowing me to speak, and I urge the Minister to act in the best interests of our senior citizens.

10.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on his good fortune in being drawn second in the ballot for this series of Adjournment debates and I congratulate the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on his initiative in joining in.

I take issue with both hon. Members over their suggestion that pensioners have fared less well and been treated less fairly under this Government than under the Labour Government. The hon. Gentlemen confined their criticism largely to matters related to pensioners' ability to meet fuel costs during the winter, but the issues that they raised go far wider. It is simply not true that the Government have failed to understand or meet the needs of pensioners. Contrary to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Walsall, North, the average pensioner is better off, and help with fuel costs for those on the lowest incomes is substantially greater, than when the Labour party was in power.

The hon. Member for Mansfield cited statistics that he claimed showed how pensioners were worse off. He should compare those figures with the figures for 1979. The number of pensioners in the lowest 20 per cent. of incomes has fallen substantially. The average pensioner income as a proportion of the average wage fell under the Labour Government, but rose under this Government.

We have honoured our pledge—it was a pledge made before the election and not a change made afterwards—to protect the value of the basic state pension against inflation, despite the fact that 1 million new pensioners have come on to the scene since 1979. The basic pension provides a secure foundation for income in retirement, but more important to pensioners as a group is the value of their total income. During our first seven years in office, pensioners' average total net income has risen by 23 per cent. in real terms—much faster than it did under the Labour Government. Average income from savings—an important element and one of which we are very proud because it suggests the success of our policies and the progress of the economy—has risen by 64 per cent., and average income from occupational pensions has risen by 56 per cent.

The latest figures show that 80 per cent. of pensioners have a source of income other than state benefits, and 85 per cent. of recently retired pensioner couples have such a source of income. That reflects the growth in occupational pensions and savings, thanks to economic growth and the control of inflation. For retired people living on fixed incomes, nothing is worse than runaway inflation, which eats away remorselessly at the value of savings which it may have taken the whole of a working life to accumulate.

Under this Government, £23 billion is to go this year on benefits for the elderly—the basic pension, income support, the state earnings-related pension and the old graduated pension. That is virtually half of all social security spending, which is by far the biggest item of Government expenditure and has increased by one third since 1979. Under this Government, expenditure on benefits for the elderly has increased by 24 per cent. above the rate of inflation.

We recognise, however, that some pensioners have not shared fully in the increased prosperity of the past eight years or so. The hon. Member for Walsall, North knows that I cannot, I am afraid, make a new announcement today, but I remind him that on 24 November my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced an extra £200 million for the poorest pensioners—those on income support. Under those arrangements, 2·6 million elderly pensioners will gain. There are new premiums for pensioners aged 75 and over, for those aged 80 and over and for disabled people over 60. That will mean an extra £2·50 a week next winter for single pensioners and an extra £3·50 for couples, over and above the increases announced for next April.

Mr. Meale: The Government seem to be giving with one hand and taking away with the other. The Government gave guarantees that people of pensionable age would lose only £2·50 under the new housing benefit regulations, yet many millions of pensioners have lost considerable sums, and even the premiums announced go only a tiny part of the way to replacing what is being taken away from pensioners.

Mr. Lloyd: Some pensioners have lost, but the point about the changes is that sums of money are redirected to those who need it most. As we did when considering these reforms, the hon. Gentleman should think about the poorer pensioners. The new arrangements for housing benefits mean that those on income support will have 100 per cent. of their rents paid. That was not the case previously, because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, there were about six different tapers and many ways of calculating housing benefit which were unfair between pensioners on the same income. This time, we have ensured that those with the lowest incomes receive the fullest help, and that the help is greater for those with higher rents. The changes have achieved exactly what we intended. If the hon. Gentleman is interested in the lowest paid of the pensioners, he should be interested, too, in the help that we are giving. Those who have lost have, by definition, been those above the lowest limits.

Mr. Winnick: Not much above the lower limits.

Mr. Lloyd: They certainly have been above the lowest limits. The point of the exercise is to direct help to where it is most needed.

Hon. Members will, I am sure, be aware that extra help to those pensioners who receive income support is targeted, in recognition of the extra needs which pensioners have, through the pensioner premiums. I should stress—as the hon. Member for Mansfield did not—that the £417 million that we paid last year in the form of heating additions was all put into the pot when the income support rates and the additional premiums were determined. That £417 million was far greater in real terms than the amount spent by the Labour Government on heating allowances and additions for the elderly. It represents a real increase in care in terms of heating.

These basic benefit rates are designed to provide sufficient money to enable pensioners to pay for their heating costs during a normal winter. We have, however, as last year, provided for additional help to be given to pensioners on income support at times when the weather is especially cold. The new arrangements for making payments under the social fund cold weather payment regulations bring forward and extend a scheme which was operated successfuly under supplementary benefit last year, and was not matched by any scheme run by the

Labour Government. This new assistance to those on lowest incomes is directed to those whose heating bills will be higher because of the cold weather in their areas.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North asked what the £5 would mean. It will mean that pensioners will receive £5, which is equivalent to nearly half of the average heating fuel costs of a family—not just of a single pensioner or of a small household, but of the average household. It is a significant addition when compared with fuel prices.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North mentioned huge increases in gas prices. In fact, the increase, when compared with the rate of inflation during the past five years, is a negative one. During that period, gas prices have not risen faster than inflation. I accept that, since 1979, they have risen by about 2·4 per cent., which is about the increase in the basic pension, but it is far below the increase in pensioner incomes of which I spoke earlier.

The new rules link entitlement to receipt of the income support pensioner premium—this is the improvement—thereby allowing men and women aged 60 to 64 to qualify for help for the first time. We have deliberately kept the new arrangements as simple as possible so that the rules are easy for people to understand and for our local offices to operate.

Mr. Meale: I said that £5 was paltry for a specific reason. We have already had a substantial increase in electricity prices and, undoubtedly, there will be further increases prior to the privatisation of that industry. Is the Minister serious in saying that £5 is generous? Many people of pensionable age in my constituency rely on coal and coke products to keep warm. Pensioners in my constituency are faced with debt or death. We want the Minister to accept that £5 a week is insufficient during the winter months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. An intervention should be short at any time, but especially when debates are time-capped.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Member for Mansfield has again referred to the £5. All I can say is that there was no such scheme when his party was in power. It is £5 more than nothing and that is a useful sum, especially—

Mr. Winnick: When will it be paid?

Mr. Lloyd: It will be paid in the week afterwards, before the bills come in. Last year, our system worked well administratively, because it was simple and straightforward.

Mr. Winnick: It must be freezing.

Mr. Lloyd: The temperature must drop to zero, but, as I have already made clear to the hon. Member for Walsall, North, the £417 million for heating additions paid by the Government last year—which was far higher than was paid at any time under the previous Labour Government—has all been redirected to the elderly in the pensioner premiums. The new regulations will allow non-householder pensioners for the first time to qualify for help.

We have made a change to the rules—this shows the simplicity and why there can be such speed of reaction—so that any period of seven consecutive days, when the temperature averages 0 deg C or below, may now be counted, rather than a fixed Sunday to Monday period being used as last year. We expect that all those changes will about double the potential for payments to be made to pensioners—and indeed to others entitled to such help—during the coming winter.

The hon. Member for Mansfield spoke about hypothermia and excess winter mortality, which the Government take seriously. However, the number of people suffering from hypothermia has hovered at about the same level—about 500—each year. It did reach a peak and, as the hon. Gentleman raised the matter, I shall tell him that the peak was in the winter of 1978-79, before this Government came into office. If the hon. Gentleman sees a connection between figures and Governments, let him make a connection there. A much more important indicator of the effects of cold weather on vulnerable groups is the extent to which overall mortality in the winter exceeds that in the summer. Those deaths are largely due to heart disease, strokes and chest infections, and during the past 35 years the underlying trend in excess winter mortality has been downward. Again, there was a blip in the figures—the line turned up—and that was between 1974 and 1979-80. Again, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a connection, that is one from which he may draw his conclusions.

To show how seriously we regard the matter, I can tell hon. Members that the Medical Research Council has set up a working group to consider carefully this issue and to tell the Government urgently where extra research needs to be carried out. We will then understand the problem more fully and be able to take the necessary action to deal with it far more effectively than the previous Labour Government did.

We have taken steps to protect pensioners' incomes and savings. We have also ensured that adequate provision is made through the benefits system for those dependent on income-related benefits so that all pensioners may face the coming months without the fear that they will be unable to keep themselves warm. We have taken trouble to launch an informative Keep Warm, Keep Well campaign. The Government's record in looking after poorer pensioners stands up to any scrutiny, and I am sure that the House will endorse that view.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11.*

Air Crash, Lockerbie

11 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the disaster that occurred last night at Lockerbie.

A Boeing 747 aircraft of Pan American Airways, flight 103 from Heathrow to New York, believed to be carrying 243 passengers and 15 crew, was following its normal track over south Scotland under surveillance from the Scottish air traffic control centre at Prestwick. Shortly after seven o'clock, when the aircraft was 20 miles north-west of Carlisle and two minutes after the last radio contact, the controller at Prestwick observed the disappearance from his screen of the secondary surveillance radar response, which identifies the aircraft. The primary radar return from the aircraft then split into several returns around the last known position. I am assured by the Civil Aviation Authority that the Scottish air traffic control centre had no indication of any other aircraft in the vicinity at the time.

Wreckage of the aircraft came down in a swathe of some 10 miles or more, and substantial parts fell on the town of Lockerbie causing the destruction of houses, a petrol station and cars on the A74, and substantial further damage from fire. Hon. Members may already have seen on their television screens some of the devastation that occurred as a result. The emergency services are still searching for survivors but it seems unlikely that anybody escaped from the aircraft. Five people in Lockerbie have been taken to hospital but the full extent of the casualties on the ground is still not known.

It is, of course, too soon to draw any conclusions about the cause of this terrible disaster. A team from my Department's air accident investigation branch arrived at Lockerbie just after midnight and has already begun its work. Representatives of the American Government and the manufacturers are being invited to assist them in accordance with international practice. The inquiry will be conducted with all the urgency appropriate to an event of this kind. A full report will be published as soon as possible and an initial bulletin setting out the facts revealed in the first stage of the investigation will be published shortly.

The House will wish to join me in an expression of deeply felt grief at this tragedy. It is already clear that the loss of life is greater than in any air accident that has previously taken place in the United Kingdom and as yet we have little indication of the extent of the losses among the people of the Lockerbie area. I also express on behalf of the Government, and I am sure the House, our deepest sympathy with the American people and our great admiration of the emergency services which served us so well last night. Search and rescue and support helicopters, aircraft and mountain rescue teams were involved, as well as ground support medical and search teams from service units all over the country. Their work is still going on at the site of the crash and in the surrounding areas, and will continue for as long as is required.

Our thoughts today and throughout Christmas will be with those whose relatives and friends died there last night.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I offer our deepest sympathies to the relatives and friends of all those who died in last night's terrible tragedy. Last night in Lockerbie we saw a nightmare come true. All of us feel a deep sense of shock. Our thoughts are with the people of Lockerbie and those in Britain, the United States and other countries who have lost their loved ones.

The House is aware that the Secretary of State for Scotland and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) are in Lockerbie and will undoubtedly express the sympathy of the House for all those who have been affected by this terrible disaster.

Once more, the House is greatly indebted to the emergency services, including the police, the Army, hospitals, the fire brigade and others, for the rescue operation that was launched within minutes of the disaster, and is continuing throughout the day. Yet again, the House and the country pay tribute to their professionalism, dedication and heroism and to the courage of ordinary people who attempted to join in the rescue last night.

In the few remaining days of 1988, and only nine days after the Clapham rail disaster, this horrific aviation tragedy makes December 1988 one of our worst months for deaths in the passenger transport industries. It concludes almost two years of an unprecedented collection of transport industry tragedies, recorded in the names of the Herald of Free Enterprise, Piper Alpha, King's Cross, Clapham junction, and now Lockerbie, involving the loss of over 800 lives and affecting the relatives and many of those involved in our rescue and treatment services.

We welcome the Secretary of State's assurance that the investigation into the cause of this terrible tragedy has already begun and is being led by the Department of Transport's air accident investigation branch, which has the reputation of being one of the best in the world. Does the Secretary of State agree that it would be better if we all withheld any speculation about what may have caused the disintegration of the plane until that investigation is complete? The task of all of us is to ensure that the chances of such accidents occurring are as rare as it is humanly possible to make them.

I assure the Secretary of State that he has our full support in ensuring that any lessons that are learnt in the course of the investigation into last night's dreadful accident are acted upon straight away. We can never make travel completely safe, but in 1989 we must all redouble our efforts to maintain and improve safety in our transport industries.

Mr. Channon: I am sure that I speak for the whole House when I say how much I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman has said. I agree with every word that he has spoken this morning. No one could be more aware than me of the terrible disasters that have taken place in recent months. I am grateful to him for his tribute to the air accident investigation branch. I confirm that the investigation is taking place. If lessons are learnt quickly, immediate steps will be taken, but I entirely agree that at this stage it would be premature and wrong to speculate about the cause of this appalling disaster.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): As the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) told the House last night, he has gone to be with his constituents in Lockerbie this morning. Therefore, as the Member for the next-door constituency, may I convey to him and to the House the real and deep sense of sympathy felt throughout the south of Scotland for our neighbours in the town of

Lockerbie and the surrounding countryside? We pray that the loss of life among the townspeople may yet prove miraculously less than was first feared last night. Our thoughts are also with the people in the United States who were looking forward to the return of their service men, students and others for family reunions at Christmas.

Is the Secretary of State aware that only two months ago, in the town of Galashiels, a full civil defence exercise was held simulating just such a crash, but I am afraid that nothing then imagined equalled the scale of devastation experienced last night in Lockerbie. Nevertheless, will he commend the value of such exercises and the work of the local emergency services as well as those from outside, such as RAF Leuchars?

May I make one request? The Secretary of State will know that the south of Scotland and the adjacent area over the border in England is used for low-flying exercises. Although there is no connection whatever between those and this high altitude accident, will he understand that the normal anxieties and frights that our people tolerate week in and week out will be greatly heightened as a result of the tragedy? Therefore, will he ask the Ministry of Defence to be sensitive and to suspend all exercises in this area over the Christmas and new year school holidays?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks and I entirely share his views about the value of the exercises that he has described to the House. In particular, I endorse what he said about the work of the emergency services, not only those nearby, but those who came from many places a long distance away. The House will know of the many tributes that have been paid to them on television. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who has been in his constituency, has confirmed that, and that is important. Low-flying aircraft are obviously a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I shall see that the right hon. Gentleman's remarks are conveyed to him at once.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I want to associate myself and those whom I represent with all that has been said so far in sympathy for those bereaved and in praise of the emergency services. This has not been a good month. It would be wrong to speculate about the cause of the accident at this moment. However, it must be said, for those continuing to fly in the Boeing 747, that it seems most unlikely that that aircraft, which is one of the safest in the world, having a basically military design, of which there are more than 700 in service, of which 168 are still on order, and which has a record of 23 million hours of commercial service, is at fault. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will confirm that. As to a bomb, it seems most unlikely that a terrorist would choose to plant one at Heathrow, where security is probably the tightest in the world.

Will my right hon. Friend do something to improve the telephone services for the emergency lines that have been made available? At this juncture, people want more than anything else news of what is happening. The emergency lines have been permanently engaged since the telephone numbers were announced.

Mr. Channon: I endorse my hon. Friend's remarks concerning the emergency lines. There have been many complaints, but obviously there can be difficulties at a time like this. However, I have asked my officials to pursue that matter with the relevant authorities as a matter of urgency to see whether more lines can be put into operation. I confirm my hon. Friend's comments concerning Heathrow's very good security record in the past, and I am grateful to him for pointing it out.

A formal structural review of the Boeing 747 took place a few years ago, and I understand that the Civil Aviation Authority has no reason to question the integrity of the aircraft in airline service—so I agree with my hon. Friend's observations.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): I associate myself with the sympathy that has been expressed this morning. The Secretary of State will agree that the fortitude displayed by the people of Lockerbie and by bereaved relatives in the United States of America is remarkable.

Once the official investigation is under way, what will be done to mobilise resources for the benefit of the living victims of the Lockerbie tragedy? Will the Government give an assurance that there will be substantial mobilisation of resources from central Government to local government to deal with what will be fairly long-term difficulties in the aftermath of the disaster? I refer in particular to the demolition of houses and the need to rehouse the people who lived in them.

Mr. Channon: I agree with the comments made in the first part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. As to the questions he raises, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office is present and has heard the hon. Gentleman's comments. As the hon. Member knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is in the disaster area. Obviously he is examining the situation and will carefully consider what has been said by the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Member will probably know that the regional council has opened an emergency fund, to which the Government will contribute in the normal way.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has asked me to tell the House on his behalf that as he and I share a common adult experience of many years of flying service aircraft, and have a love of aviation, we are horrified by what happened last night. We both wish to make it clear that we accept that civil aviation is a very safe means of transport. We regularly fly between London and Scotland, and believe that the best example that we can give is to continue our lives as we have in the past.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Minister that we in Scotland are shocked and horrified at what happened in Lockerbie, and we should like to place on record our thanks to the rescue services for their splendid work and the effectiveness of their operations. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that his Department's view is that, at this stage, no one should express views or make statements that will in any way cast doubts on the integrity of the Boeing 747, which is one of the most reliable aircraft that the world has ever known?

Mr. Channon: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. His comments about aviation in general and about the Boeing in particular come very well from my hon. Friend, with his aviation experience, which carries considerable weight in the House. I acknowledge also his

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remarks about the emergency services. Everyone who has been to Lockerbie has expressed their admiration for what they have done.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): All of us who identify with the small town and village communities of Scotland identify this morning with the shock and grief that Lockerbie is enduring. On behalf of Scottish colleagues on the Labour Benches in particular, I associate myself with the expressions of sympathy and also those of admiration for all the men and women of the rescue and humanitarian services, of whose efforts we stand in awe.

Clearly, there are two interlocking tragedies—the horror of a major air crash allied, almost uniquely, with such devastation on the ground. Lockerbie will endure a prolonged aftermath of human suffering, psychological trauma, and physical damage. I seek the assurance of Ministers that there will be generous resources to meet all needs, and that full attention will be paid to the sensibilities of the people living in the area affected—including those to which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) referred.

On behalf of all Scottish Opposition Members, I express personal sympathy for the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro),whose anguish last night was the mark of a man who is truly a part of the community that he represents.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), and my right hon. and hon. Friends are particularly appreciative of his remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

As to the devastation on the ground at Lockerbie, a preliminary view is that about 10 houses are affected. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office will take full account of what has been said by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, and by other right hon. and hon. Members, and will urgently convey those views to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Again, I share the hon. Gentleman's comments about the emergency services.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): As one of Heathrow's Members of Parliament, although we are a long distance from the place of last night's events, I and all those whom I represent feel very close to that appalling tragedy. I join with other right hon. and hon. Members in expressing heartfelt sympathy for all those who are suffering.

I ask my right hon. Friend to join me in thanking all of those at Heathrow—the people who work for Pan Am and for Heathrow Airport Ltd., and the Metropolitan police—for all they tried to do in difficult circumstances, being so far away from the place of the tragedy. As I shall be going straight to Heathrow shortly, will my right hon. Friend allow me to pass on his thanks? Also, can he assure me that if, when the causes of the disaster are known, there are found to be any Heathrow implications, they will be included in the inquiry?

Mr. Channon: I can give my hon. Friend all the assurances that he seeks. The people at Heathrow should have not only my best wishes but those of the whole House for working far beyond the call of duty and for behaving extremely responsibly and helpfully after last night's appalling disaster; it was very encouraging to see them on television.

I endorse my hon. Friend's expressions of sympathy for all those suffering from the appalling accident—not only the Scottish but the American families affected. Of all the terrible things to happen, perhaps such a disaster is even worse at this time of year. All implications will be considered, and the inquiry's report will be published in the usual way.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): While joining in the condolences to the families and to the loved ones of those who have died, can I ask the Secretary of State whether there is anything that he can do to speed up the process of inquiry? Does he recall that the major accident at Manchester airport, in which over 50 lives were lost, was on 22 August 1985, yet we will still await a full and definitive report on the inquiries that were made? While I appreciate the Minister's difficulties, and the need for complete thoroughness, does he recognise that there is genuine public concern about the time that it takes to complete air disaster inquiries, and that if lessons can save lives, then urgency is very urgent indeed?

Mr. Channon: I have some sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, although I hope that in respect of the particular accident to which he refers it will not be long before a full report is published. As to the Lockerbie disaster, its causes must be found and the report must be thorough and, if possible, be published much quicker. More important even that, if lessons are to be learned, they must be applied straight away—long before the report is necessarily published. The air accident investigation branch will issue a special bulletin describing the circumstances of the accident as soon as it can. Even before, or after, that special bulletin, if action is shown to be needed in whatever field, we shall take it straight away.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): While sharing in the immeasurable grief sustained by the families of those who have lost their loved ones in this appalling accident, may I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm that security at Heathrow and Gatwick is at a very high and sustainable level and will remain so? Will he accept that the thoughts and support of the whole House are also with him in having to deal with the appalling tragedies of the past few weeks?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind personal remarks. I certainly confirm that the security arrangements at Heathrow and Gatwick are among the best in the world. We intend to maintain them at that level, and if more needs to be done it will be done.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I offer my deepest sympathy to the families, American and Scottish, who have suffered so grievously as a result of this tragic accident? May I remind the Secretary of State that the events following the Piper Alpha accident plainly demonstrate that it is possible to offer compensation and assistance to the victims of such tragedies rapidly and expeditiously, and will he urge on those concerned that similarly rapid and expeditious assistance be given to the Scottish families who have suffered in this tragedy?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has made a very fair point. In the short time that has elapsed it has been impossible to go into the matter in enormous detail, but I shall see that the hon. Gentleman's important suggestion is vigorously pursued.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Having had some experience in the past of aircraft accident investigation, I hope that there will be no constraint on the time available for the inspectors to investigate the accident, and that they will not be rushed into giving credence immediately to any particular theory.

May I ask my right hon. Friend whether there is any evidence yet that the black box flight recorder has been found?

Mr. Channon: I understand—although it is a very preliminary impression—that one recorder has been found. *[Interruption.]* I understand that two have now been found, although that will have to be confirmed. When I arrived at the House it was thought that only one had been found.

My hon. Friend is right: there can be no constraint. We must get at the truth. I hope, however, that it may be possible at an earlier stage to give the House and the public more information if there are immediate lessons to be learnt or ways of allaying anxiety. We shall not try to hold back.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): It is less than six months since I was in the Chamber stumbling for words to express adequately the grief and shock that I felt after the Piper Alpha tragedy. People in the north-east of Scotland and in my own town of Aberdeen still feel that sense of shock, and they will sympathise today with those in the south-west who have suffered so tragically. May I on their behalf express sympathy and condolences to the relatives of the victims?

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has made an important point. In the past two years, since the Chinook disaster and more recently the Piper Alpha disaster, we in the north-east of Scotland have been embroiled in claims for compensation. In this country compensation claims follow on proof of negligence, and there may be some difficulty in proving negligence if some of the current speculation proves correct. Will the Secretary of State consider that aspect and allow us to avoid complicated trans-Atlantic legal processes?

Mr. Channon: Like his hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), the hon. Gentleman has made a fair point, which will obviously have to be gone into as speedily as possible. It is a human and difficult question, and if it can be resolved speedily I am sure that the whole House will be pleased.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Can my right hon. Friend tell us whether the passenger list has yet been published? Having had close personal experience of a serious aircraft accident myself, I have to say that on balance, even if the existing passenger list is not accurate —and it may well not be—my right hon. Friend would be well advised to see whether it can be made public.

Will my right hon. Friend also question the merits of the proposition that relatives should be flown to the site of the disaster?

Mr. Channon: I do not think that the latter point is a question for me. I understood that the suggestion had come from Pan American Airways, but I do not think that the Government or I could be involved in it. However, I take note of my hon. Friend's reservations.

Again, it is for the aircraft company to decide when to release the passenger list. There is a difficult balance to be drawn; I do not think that it is possible to get it right. My hon. Friend may well be correct, but on the other hand passenger lists are liable to change up to the last minute. The flight was not fully booked and people may have got on at the last minute, or got off. I understand the reluctance to publish the list too early, but I am sure that it is common ground between us that when an accurate account can be published, the sooner that people are put out of the appalling agony of waiting the better, and I know that the airline has that in mind.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Before the House becomes too concerned about security at Heathrow, will the Secretary of State confirm that the aircraft started its flight in Frankfurt? Will he also tell us whether he knows how many American military personnel were on board returning to the United States on leave?

Mr Channon: The hon. Gentleman is wrong: it was a through flight. The flight numbers were the same, but there was a change at Heathrow. After the Frankfurt-London flight, a new plane was to take the passengers from London to New York.

I certainly shall not speculate on possible causes of the accident now, but I want the House to understand the factual position. I am not sure that I have the exact number of passengers who came from Frankfurt, but we believe it to be about 31. That, too, will become much clearer in the next few hours.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Of course it is too early to speculate on the causes of this ghastly accident. I also acknowledge that Heathrow and Gatwick—and, for that matter, Frankfurt and Berlin—are among the safest airports in the world. Nevertheless, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the inquiry will be wide enough to consider a point that I have raised before—that checks for explosives carried out at airports are very inadequate compared with, for example, checks carried out in the Houses of Parliament?

Mr. Channon: That too is a very important point. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend would expect me to agree with him until I have had the matter checked, but anything that is relevant to the disaster will have to be carefully considered.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): One of the most appalling aspects of this tragic disaster is the sudden death and destruction that descended on people living on the ground. Is it absolutely necessary for a flight from London to the United States to travel for more than an hour over our land? Is it not possible to reach an international agreement whereby planes could be routed out to sea, possibly flying parallel to either our eastern or our western coastline, and thus avoid this kind of risk?

Mr. Channon: The aircraft's flight pattern was one of the normal patterns, although flight patterns depend on wind and a number of other factors. Routes must be reasonably short; they must also fit in with the wind

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patterns of the time, and they therefore vary. A great many aircraft have to fly over land, and I do not know whether there is much chance of avoiding that. I shall certainly consider what my hon. Friend has said, but I would not like to hold out any hope. It is probably impractical to change the practice.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood):All of us with constituencies that lie beneath the airways of Britain will wish to be associated with my right hon. Friend's expressions of sympathy to the people of Lockerbie.

My right hon. Friend has said that the flight originated in Frankfurt, and that the passengers changed aeroplanes at Heathrow. Can he confirm that it would be possible for a passenger starting his journey in Frankfurt to leave the aeroplane at Heathrow, but that his baggage would go on to the new aeroplane and continue on its outbound flight without further checks? If he cannot answer now, can he confirm that the inquiry will look into the question?

Mr. Channon: That is clearly pertinent, although it depends on what caused the crash. It will clearly have to be investigated.

A passenger in transit from Frankfurt to New York is kept on the air side. He does not go through immigration or customs, but goes into a transit lounge on the air side, and his baggage is also moved from one plane to the other through the air side. The passenger never goes into the terminal. I should not have thought it possible for a passenger to leave the plane and for his luggage to stay on board, but I do not want to commit myself: that will obviously have to be looked into.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): May I add to the expressions of sympathy that have already been offered? As one who has travelled more than once on flight PA 103 from Frankfurt to London, may I also pay tribute to the security screening at Frankfurt, but also ask my right hon. Friend to look particularly at the question of baggage? I understand that it is put straight on to the new plane, whatever may happen to the passengers. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that that angle is thoroughly examined?

Mr. Channon: Yes, that will clearly have to be looked at. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said in the first half of his question.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Is it not the case that many of the passengers had been involved in defending freedom in the West? In view of that, when the Government send their condolences to the people of the United States, will they include thanks for the work that those passengers were doing on behalf of us all?

Mr. Channon: Yes. A large number of American service men were, unfortunately, on the plane. I agree with my hon. Friend. I shall make sure that that is done.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that it is not possible to call all hon. Members who wish to participate but I am sure that all those who have not been called wish to be associated with the expressions of distress about this tragedy. I suggest that the hon. Members for York (Mr. Gregory) and for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) should take half an hour each for their Adjournment debates instead of three quarters of an hour.

Tourism

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.30 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Following that tragic statement, I turn to the tourist industry in the United Kingdom, Britain's fastest growing industry, which attracts to it almost 1,000 new people a year. Indeed, 1·4 million people are directly employed in the industry, and probably a further 1 million in schools and industrial catering. I understand that a record 15·4 million overseas visitors came to the United Kingdom last year and spent three times what we earn from car exports. That puts the industry into its proper context. We are talking about an annual turnover of some £5,000 million.

I have taken a great interest in tourism for many years, both before I became a Member of this House and since. I declare an interest as the parliamentary consultant to Consort Hotels, the largest consortium of independent hoteliers in the United Kingdom, whose headquarters is in my constituency.

The news, however, is not all good. The industry is not resting on its laurels. Some £2,000 million of capital investment is going into it. The industry is moving away from a low-paid image, especially when one sees young chefs with salaries of £20,000 and more. More specifically, in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, tourism is now worth some £600 million. It supports 85,000 full-time jobs and thousands more part-time jobs, in addition to the self-employed, but it is almost 20 years since the Department of Tourism Act 1969 reached the statute book. There is clearly a need for the review that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), has set in motion of the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board.

My first major question to my hon. Friend is why the review is so restrictive. Tourism affects everyone in the United Kingdom, not simply England. To leave Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland out of that major review is to do a disservice to those parts of the United Kingdom. Overseas visitors regard that as an arbitrary decision by the Government. My hon. Friend is an active and busy Minister, to whom I pay tribute, but his responsibilities stop at the English frontier and do not extend to the Principality of Wales or to Scotland, let alone to Ulster. We need a Minister to co-ordinate these activities, a matter to which I shall refer later.

That brings me to the role of the regional boards. For some years we have had 12 regional boards. Again, that is a rather arbitrary figure. My hon. Friend works assiduously in the Department of Employment. One of his other hats—as with his colleagues—involves the Manpower Services Commission. The MSC is divided into eight regions in England. It is peculiar that there should be 12 regional boards that cover those eight regions.

At the very least, will he not consider reducing the plethora of boards to eight so that officials do not duplicate work? It would be far better to reduce the number of boards but to increase their geographical size and to reduce them to four—a northern board, a central board, a south-western board and a south and south-eastern board. That would allow much better career development and a much greater scale of overseas work.

I have referred to the red tape in the English regional boards, but the problem is exacerbated by the number of national boards within the United Kingdom. Chaos has reigned because the national tourist boards do not work together initially on the Crown classification system—Scotland going ahead of the rest of the country, Wales carrying out a slightly separate operation and now England. The appointment of a Minister with overall responsibility for United Kingdom tourism is long overdue.

There is also an imbalance of tourism funding in the United Kingdom. In a debate on this subject in another place, Lord Ponsonby rightly referred to the fact that Wales receives roughly eight times as much funding from the Government, per pound of tourist spending, as is received by England, and that Scotland receives three times as much. Like the noble Lord, I do not begrudge the sums that are spent in that way, but there is nevertheless quite an imbalance.

The tourist information centres are urgently in need of review—for, among other reasons, their inadequate siting. It is vital that there should be tourist information centres at all our major ports of entry, yet at the busiest of all, Dover, the tourist information centre is located at the point where one leaves the country, not where one arrives. Some tourist information centres are relegated to the reference departments of town halls.

As for the inadequate opening hours of tourist information centres, to take one of Britain's busiest attractions, the Tower of London, which 2·3 million visitors visited last year, one finds that the tourist information centre is closed at this time of the year. It is closed for the whole of the winter season. I have seen parties of Japanese visitors, who are always welcome to Britain, looking into the tourist information centre where they see a scrawled note saying, "Reopens at Easter." Nothing could be further from the truth. It is time that tourist information centres at such major points were open throughout the year.

Furthermore, in the early evening—a time when accommodation needs to be made available for the travelling visitor—and on Sunday mornings, tourist information centres should be open, but of course that does not fit into the natural pattern of the local government officer's working day. How many of them have an adequate knowledge of foreign languages? Very few of them speak other than their native tongue. The same problem arises in other parts of the United Kingdom. There are problems over staffing and languages and the amount of literature that can be made available to visitors.

The charging pattern of tourist information centres is inconsistent. The Scottish tourist information centres charge a 10 per cent. commission for the first night's accommodation. There is no general framework throughout the United Kingdom. I do not believe that there is a rationale for maintaining automatic district council responsibility for this key sector of visitor information. The local government legislation requires six major services to be put out to competitive tender. I refer to street cleaning, refuse collection and the like. That means that almost £3,000 million worth of services will be put out to tender next year. I ask my hon. Friend to hold discussions with his colleagues to ensure that tourist information services should go out to competitive tender in the next tranche. Let the professionals market tourism.

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

In my own constituency of York there are two tourist information centres—the lacklustre one, where few of the staff speak foreign languages, which is closed on Sunday mornings and the early evenings that is run by the district council, which regards tourism as so lacking in interest that it does not even appoint staff when vacancies occur, and another one that has been set up by the professionals, the hoteliers, restaurateurs and others who provide various amenities. That is despite the fact that the Socialist-controlled council has twice removed their signs. However, they could work in harmony and I wish them to do so, because the professionals will always show the right way forward.

Above all, at a time when many of our constituents are turning to the holiday pages of their newspapers and television screens, tourist information centres could become United Kingdom's holiday shops and a chain of domestic travel shops. There are 50 British tour operators selling United Kingdom holiday destinations. Why not give their brochures away and sell their holidays through the British tourist information centres?

Turning to the major subject of signposting, the House should be concerned with two important matters. First, there is inadequate signposting on major roads. What consultation has there been with the Department of Transport in conjunction with the Department of Employment? Why is not greater notice given on the A10 of the attractions available at major venues such as York? Why is the "i" information sign being removed from service stations?

The second aspect is deemed consent, which has been going back and forth between Departments, producing increasing red tape. I cannot understand why there are delays in implementing such a sensible measure. There are trials in Nottingham and Kent and experiments in three districts on the south coast. As they are slightly unusual places, there is a lack of enthusiasm in that part of the world, and no doubt my hon. Friend will report to the House that deemed consent is not a success. While the experiment on the south coast is taking place, I suggest that he should consider deemed consent in north Yorkshire and south Somerset, two quite different parts of the country within his portfolio of English tourism.

The year 1990 is to be designated "European year for tourism". With the completion of the single European market and the opening of the Channel tunnel, there will be even greater competition for visitors. By 1994, Britain's tourism could be worth more than £23,000 million. Will the United Kingdom take the lead in co-ordinating information on visitor facilities and accommodation? It seems incredible to overseas visitors to Britain that there are no common symbols, and when we visit other EC member states there is great confusion.

I believe that there is an EC classification in the non-binding EC recommendations on hotel symbols, but those who leave the House today and travel the length and breadth of Britain will see the great confusion on hotel boards. They will see the symbols of the Automobile Association and the Royal Automobile Club which have their own inspectorates. Still fading on hotel boards, they are the hearts in the heart of England and the sea horses in the Isle of Wight. They will see the private sector Egon Ronay signs.

Some of the national boards believe that that is a good idea and have developed the crown symbol. That is clearly not enough, when pubs attract three or even four crowns. How can they be compared with a Park lane hotel? Five gold crowns are very appropriate to this time of year, but they would cause confusion to a visitor from Chicago looking to spend a little time in addition to his conference in London or elsewhere in such honey pots as York, Edinburgh, Stratford or further north in the Minister's constituency. Let us send a clear message to the new European Commissioner for Tourism. We need a European system for facilities and accommodation that commands respect and has integrity.

I know my hon. Friend's keen interest in educational matters as they affect tourism. I am pleased that the first GCSE course in tourism has been created and I admire the work of the Southern Examining Board in getting that off the ground, and the sponsors of the course, particularly the lead sponsor, American Express. I hope that the Minister will urge industry to participate fully in the modules where there is employer involvement and hold discussions with the Department of Education and Science to ensure that the course is widely known and not seen simply as a southern-based activity.

But that is still not enough. We are producing too many chiefs and not enough Indians. We are sadly short of craft trainees. There is a disproportionate number of potential managers. They cannot all manage, although they are qualified to do so. We should ensure that colleges produce courses with real career prospects, with more emphasis on housekeeping, kitchen brigades and service staff so that we do not have to employ those much-needed staff from outside the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend has also turned his attention to seasonality. What market research has been undertaken on the incentives required to extend the season? I know that he has spoken on many occasions about extending the season, but clearly the carrot has to be of a fiscal nature. Before the Chancellor goes into economic purdah, perhaps my hon. Friend will convey that recommendation to him.

Mr. Alan Devereux, chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board, an Essex anglophile who has moved north and for whom I have a great deal of time, said on 23 November:

> "Scottish tourism cannot thrive solely on new buildings, swimming pools and visitor centres."

I agree with him. He continued:

> "Historic buildings and monuments represent the greater part of our entertainment portfolio and they need to provide increasing entertainment and amenity".

I appreciate that I place my hon. Friend in some predicament in quoting from a leading figure in the Scottish tourist industry, but I did not restrict the debate to English tourism. That is one of the many examples applying to tourism in the United Kingdom.

The call today is for better co-ordination. The travel trade will not fly to the United Kingdom to assess opportunities at three separate trade exhibitions. There is the moot for England, and on different weeks there are events in Wales and Scotland. Surely we can combine travel trade events on one site and, if appropriate, rotate the venue.

The Department of Employment is a sponsoring Ministry for tourism but greater funds are coming from other Departments. A £6 million grant made recently in Birmingham by the Department of the Environment represents half the English tourist board section 4 funds

and is more than 20 times greater than the average English tourist board grant. I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Minister at the Department of the Environment is probably doing his Christmas shopping since we are sitting so late, but no doubt these points can be conveyed to him by my hon. Friend the Minister at the Department of Employment. As for section 4 funding, which represented a good deal, I hope that we shall continue a move from grants towards soft loans.

Clearly, we are getting value for money. The nation currently enjoys excellent returns for taxpayers' investment in tourism. For 1988-89, the British Tourist Authority received £23.8 million Government grant in aid. I understand that every pound of taxpayers' grant currently earns more than £300 in foreign currency. Let us compare that with the agricultural lobby. Britain supports the £11,500 million agriculture industry by Government grants of £1,855 million—a return of just £6.20 for every £1 of funding. My hon. Friend the Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the other place have a very good case to make in Cabinet to get a little larger slice of the taxpayers' cake for tourism.

The review now reaching its conclusion should ensure more competition in the supply of visitor information, less local government bureaucracy, an assurance of strong and continuous Government support to the British Tourist Authority and an end to the in-house consultative work by the English tourist board Scottish tourist board and Wales tourist board that can and should be undertaken by the private sector. A visitor to Britain means employment for someone else. We must not take our attractions for granted, York has shown the great visitor appeal of archaeology, with its Coppergate site being transformed into a Viking museum, which is one of Britain's liveliest. In the inner cities, such as Glasgow and Liverpool, new galleries have been opened.

Those examples must not become isolated instances. Co-ordination is required to harness constructively our great potential, within environmental constraints. Let us not allow the Greek prayer for protection against the scourge of tourism to be added to the alternative service book. Through proper planning, that fear will subside and Britain and its people will benefit immeasurably from the success of tourism.

11.48 am

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on his choice of subject for this debate, and I agree with what he said about the work that my hon. Friend the Minister does for tourism. The industry vies with oil as one of our largest earners of foreign income. It will continue to grow and be successful and, as a result, there will be growing pressure on the major tourist attractions. The greatest pressure will be on London, and that is why I wish to draw my hon. Friend's attention to the need to promote tourism in the regions.

We must do as much as possible to offer tourists every opportunity to see the attractions of the other England —the England that lies outside London—which my hon. Friend the Member for York and I represent and do our best to promote. Swindon is at the centre of a beautiful area of countryside, including the Cotswolds and the Marlborough downs. People in my constituency, including those who run hotels and the facilities that are available, are trying increasingly to promote the attractions of the area.

The promotion of Britain to those who consider visiting it must be undertaken on a professional basis. I pay credit to the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board for their work in making the citizens of the European Community and countries further afield aware of what Britain has to offer to tourists. If more resources were made available, more could be done. As my hon. Friend the Minister examines the results of the recent review in his Department, will he remember the vital work that is being done professionally by those bodies?

The House would not regard it as adequate if private organisations, such as airlines, were left to do the work of promoting Britain abroad. That must be done by a professional body that is ultimately responsible to Parliament. I believe that it is well done at present, and I ask my hon. Friend to give an assurance that he will take those points into careful account and ensure that in the future Britain will continue to have as strong a presence overseas as have other countries which seek to be our rivals in the tourism industry.

11.51 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): At the outset of this debate on tourism, we should place on record our sympathies for those tourists to Britain who died in the appalling air tragedy in Scotland yesterday.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) for introducing this debate and for all that he has done over the years to raise the profile of tourism nationally and in the House. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) for his more recent work in that regard.

In recent years, the importance of tourism as a major national industry has been increasingly recognised. My hon. Friend gave the figures. The industry has a turnover of £18 billion a year, sustains 1·4 million jobs and grows at the rate of nearly 1,000 net new jobs a week. No other sector of the economy sustains new job growth at that rate. A major capital investment programme of about £2 billion, predominantly in the private sector, is under way. Tourism earns about three to four times more than the motor industry, and rather more than the aerospace industry, in export earnings.

The regional aspect of tourism is especially important and close to my heart, and I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon mentioned it. I am most impressed by the way in which tourism and leisure developments have played the lead role in rejuvenating many of our regions and cities that have suffered from economic decline. I think especially of the Albert dock development in Liverpool, which has raised the profile of Merseyside, the Wigan pier development, the waterfront developments in Hull, the maritime development in Swansea and a host of others.

My hon. Friend the Member for York talked of greater national co-ordination. While I have some sympathy with his remarks, I am sure that he will appreciate that it is not a matter for me. I can, however, offer him a little encouragement about separate exhibitions because the national boards are considering holding a British exhibition in alternate years.

[Mr. John Lee]

The principle of a tourism review has been appreciated and acknowledged by hon. Members. Scotland and Wales were not included in the review because they make their own arrangements for tourism, but I am sure that they will be interested and involved in its outcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for York repeated his argument that we should reduce the number of regional tourist boards, but the Government have no power to impose changes on them. I heard my hon. Friend's arguments—I have heard them in the past—but we must question whether the benefits of the changes would outweigh the disruption. Nevertheless, I have taken on board the points that he made.

Crown classification has caused the industry considerable frustration. We are slowly edging to an agreement, which will involve a quantitive and bolt-on quality assessment. It is hoped that an agreement will be concluded shortly so that we can move to the new crown classification procedure by September 1989.

There has been a dramatic growth in tourist information centres over recent years, of which there are 562 nationally; about 394 are open all year. At an earlier Question Time, my hon. Friend the Member for York mentioned extended opening hours, and I agree with the points that he made about greater involvement of the private sector in the management and control of TICs. The possibility of using them as domestic travel shops has much to commend it, and at present about 80 per cent. of them are run by local authorities.

My Department and the Department of Transport are in continuous contact about the specific problem of signposting, which causes considerable frustration to many people in the tourism, hospitality and leisure industry.

With regard to deemed consent, my hon. Friend the Member for York rightly said that the east Kent experiment will be evaluated. He made an interesting suggestion about extending pilot projects and mentioned north Yorkshire and south Somerset as possible areas in which to do so. I shall put those specific proposals to the Department of Transport for its consideration.

The decision that we took in Brussels last week to designate 1990 as European Tourism Year marked the coming of age of tourism as an industry in Europe. It was the first time that we had had a meeting of EEC Tourism Ministers. We have begun preliminary work on plans for this country, and I assure hon. Members that the United Kingdom will play its full part in European Tourism Year, which will raise the profile of tourism as an industry in member states. There will be a range of awards and competitions to stimulate the industry and recognition.

I very much welcome the tourism GCSE. Thirty centres are piloting the scheme, with a further 30-plus planned by September 1989, when there should be about 600 students participating. I take my hon. Friend's point that it should not be a southern-orientated experiment. We want other regions to take it on board and I shall encourage the Department of Education and Science to do what it can to promote the GCSE on a more national basis. I shall use my good offices to encourage industry fully to support the GCSE concept.

Youth Training (Income Support)

12 noon

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I regard this as not so much a debate as a story for Christmas which illuminates a small corner of life in Tory Britain in 1988.

Earlier this year, the House passed the Social Security Bill, clause 4 of which raised to 18 the minimum age for income support in return for a guaranteed place on a youth training scheme. There were exceptions in prescribed cases of severe hardship. The Act is one of a range of measures that Conservative Members dream up between the coffee and the port around their dinner tables in Knightsbridge and Belgravia to make life difficult for the lower orders—on second thoughts, perhaps not Belgravia, but Surbiton and Grantham.

The purpose of section 4 of the Social Security Act 1988 was to deal with that well-known Conservative bogy, the feckless youth who prefers to lie in bed in the morning rather than do a good day's work. The proposal met with many objections, not least from the Manpower Services Commission, which did not want its training programme clogged up with sullen youngsters dragooned on to inappropriate schemes. It met with objections also from those who argued, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) did in an Adjournment debate on 5 December, that there would not be enough YTS places for all those affected.

When the Social Security Bill had its Second Reading on 2 November last year, the Secretary of State for Social Services said:

"the training allowances for those on YTS have been set at a rate well above the basic . . . rates for most young people."

The key words in that statement are "basic" and "most". There are some serious exceptions, which were expected by the Secretary of State. He said:

"orphans and youngsters who are necessarily living away from home because of a risk of physical or sexual abuse will be able to . . . secure a training place which will carry with it payment of the training allowance at a higher rate than their benefit, so enabling them to continue to live independently."

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who replied for the Opposition, made it clear that those proposals were not adequate. He said:

"A growing number of teenagers are homeless. In the main they do not leave home for flippant or trivial reasons but because of intolerable tension at home."—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 655-67.]

I should like to deal with just one such case, a young woman in my constituency who left home because of intolerable tension. I shall not go into the details of why she left home, except to say that I am satisfied that she had good reason for living independently. She had a troubled family history. Her mother and stepfather have moved away and she has had no contact with them for the best part of a year. She is a responsible young woman who, with the help of a local advice centre, the borough council and the local office of the Department of Social Security, has made every effort to live within her meagre means. She has done everything that the Secretary of State has asked of her. She has joined a training scheme but, as a result, is not better off—as the Secretary of State alleged—but considerably worse off. She is threatened with destitution. I do not allege that this case is typical, but it is by no means unique.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) has a case in his constituency of a 17-year-old

boy whose parents are separated. He has not seen his mother for many years and his father died earlier this year. Suddenly, he found himself alone in the world, having to pay his rent out of his training allowance, which is not possible. No doubt some of the growing army of homeless young people seen around London's railway stations have similar stories.

In parts of Sunderland—including Thorney close in which Deborah Hall lives—there are whole streets in which almost no one is working. They live in a land of the permanent training scheme. In many cases, they have the "pretend jobs" of the kind to which the Prime Minister used to refer when in opposition. About 4,000 people in Sunderland are on such schemes, and registered youth vacancies rarely exceed 20. We have some of the highest unemployment in mainland Britain, which has been greatly added to recently by the closure of the shipyards.

During the general election, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North addressed youth trainees on some successful schemes. I was struck by their limited horizons. They talked about adding £1 here or 50p there to their allowances and saw stretching ahead of them a world alternating between the dole and training schemes. That is the culture which this Government have, to a large measure, been responsible for creating.

On 10 October, I received a letter from a diligent advice worker in my constituency, Mrs. Flo Watt, which sets out graphically the mathematics of life in the twilight zone I have just described:

"Deborah is 17 years of age . . . Relationships within her family have been under stress for some time. When her mother and stepfather moved to Cumbria, Deborah stayed behind in Sunderland . . . She was given a one bedroomed council flat on May 23. She applied to the Social Fund for a budgeting loan for furniture and was given £226 for a cooker, bed and bedding. This is to be repaid at £2·91 over 78 weeks. Her benefit prior to September 11"—

the cut-off point for benefit for those under 18—

"was £32·84. This included a Transitional Addition of £13·44."

That was awarded to enable her to live independently in the light of her circumstances.

Out of that, Deborah paid water charges, plus 20 per cent. of her rates—another recent innovation—which amounted to £2·50 a week. She was a responsible person and organised her finances carefully. She paid £4 a week for her electricity as part of the advanced payment scheme operated by the electricity board. Under a similar operation, she paid £5 a week for gas. She was repaying £2·91 a week for her social fund loan, which was retained from her benefit. She was also buying clothes through a mail order catalogue and paid £3·50 a week for that. That came to a total of £17·91. Her rent was paid at that time since she was in receipt of benefit. Therefore, £17·91 out of £32·84 went towards those costs. She could survive by using the remaining money for food and other essentials.

Her entitlement to income support ceased on 11 September, under the new regulations governing 16 and 17-year-olds. She received a £3 bridging allowance, followed by a further £30 bridging allowance. She started a YTS placement on 26 September with an allowance of £29·50 a week, which replaced her benefit. She received her first allowance on 30 September. As soon has her income support ended, Deborah's financial difficulties began. She has not made any payments to the social fund and, as of 10 October, was £17 behind in her gas payments. Out of her training allowance of £29·50, her budget is as follows: water charges, rates and rent £10·75, electricity £4, gas £5, mail order catalogue £3·50, social fund loan repayment £2·91 and her bus pass to get to and from the training scheme costs £5·80, £2·80 of which can be reclaimed. Those sums, including the sum that could have been reclaimed, amounted to £29·16, leaving Deborah with only 36p for food and other necessities.

The letter from Mrs. Watt continues:

"She has already had letters from the Social Fund Officer stating that she must begin making payments or face possible court action. The Gas Board have told me that they will not disconnect for the amount of £17·90, but they are obviously looking towards payments being resumed. As she did not have a guarantor or pay a security deposit to the electricity board of £100 as a new consumer, she faces immediate disconnection if she defaults on the advance payments scheme. The reason she now has to pay towards the rent is that her applicable amount under income support is only £19·40, and every pound over and above this amount means that approximately 85p is payable towards the rent.

Deborah was educated at Felstead Special School and until September 11 was successfully looking after herself and her finances. She managed to pay her commitments every week without fail. She has managed by buying second-hand furniture to make her flat quite comfortable. It is not feasible for Deborah to return to her family and she has no other relatives in the town apart from an aunt who is herself in receipt of benefit."

The big difference in Deborah's life came when she lost the transitional protection of £13·44. She had the bad luck that her training scheme did not start until two weeks after 12 September. As a result, she was no longer on income support, which meant the automatic loss of transitional protection. I understand that, once lost, it can never be reinstated.

It seems that the Secretary of State did not anticipate the situation which I have described. If he did, he did not let on when he addressed the House on Second Reading of the Social Security Bill, as it then was.

I wrote to the Minister and summarised Deborah's position. I sent a copy of my letter to all Conservative Members because I felt so strongly about the matter. I sent also a copy of Mrs. Watts's letter, which sets out the two budgets that I have outlined to the House. In my letter to Conservative Members I wrote:

"Please note that her budget includes no allowance for food and that she can only eat by defaulting on one of her other commitments . . . Although she could just about get by on Income Support, where her rent is paid, she has not the slightest chance of doing so on her training allowance, out of which she must, of course, find her rent.

So by the age of 17 this young woman is already locked into a cycle of debt from which—in an area like Sunderland—she has little prospect of escaping. She has no horizons beyond the next training scheme. Every few months the screw—in the form of new benefit or training regulations—tightens, limiting still further her already limited range of possibilities.

I appreciate that many of you will not be moved by the plight of someone in Deborah's situation. I also know however that, despite the ideological gulf that divides us, many Conservative Members do care about the human consequences of the measures that your Government is so determined to introduce. It is to these Members that this letter is addressed.

Finally, I would be glad to hear from any Conservative Member who can suggest to Deborah how she can make ends meet by any means short of turning to crime."

I received many replies, most of which were courteous. Some Conservative Members merely acknowledged my letter while others offered helpful suggestions. However, there were some rather less helpful replies from some of the backwoods. For example, the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) wrote:

[Mr. Chris Mullin]

"I don't wish to sound hardhearted—it is very often the case, and seems to be in this case, that many of the difficulties spring from actions taken by the young people themselves. So far as I can see in Deborah's case, she had the opportunity to travel to Cumbria with her parents and preferred not to do so."

The hon. Member for Thanet, North asks for the opportunity to meet the girl. I do not think that I shall add to her difficulties by introducing her to the hon. Gentleman.

I had a letter from the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner), who represents a constituency where circumstances are slightly different from those that prevail in Sunderland:

"Whilst I have some sympathy, I must say her case illustrates the utter folly of leaving home at the age of 16 or 17 and expecting the State to pick up all one's living costs."

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) also wrote:

"Incidentally, I notice that at the end of your letter you refer to the possibility of the lady in question turning to crime. I do hope I can assume that you have not been putting such ideas into her head. That would be a most irresponsible thing to do."

On 7 November, I received a reply from the Minister of State, which he also copied and sent to all Conservative Members. At that stage, it was not a helpful letter. It was clearly drafted by a civil servant living an index-linked existence and it was a bald statement of the dilemma in which Deborah found herself, but it offered no solutions.

On 17 November, I wrote again, in an attempt to breach the wall of complacency that, I felt, existed in the case. I wrote to the Minister of State:

"I regret that I have failed to convey to you the sense of urgency, nay desperation, which I and everyone else concerned with this case feel.

Your letter of November 7 badly sets out the trap that your Government has devised for persons in Deborah's situation, but it does not address the consequences. Let me spell them out: She has had to default on her repayments to the Social Fund. She is now £93·87 in arrears of rent and the debt is accumulating with every passing week. It is only a question of time before one of her creditors takes her to Court in pursuit of debts she cannot possibly repay. Since we no longer put debtors in prison (although perhaps you have this in mind for the Queen's speech on Tuesday) there is a serious possibility that she will end up on the streets. Please do not advise me as some of your colleagues have done, that she ought to return to her mother, since her family circumstances are so unhappy that, faced with a choice between going home and sleeping rough she would probably choose the latter . . . knowing as I do that you are a humane man, I cannot believe that it was ever your intention to drive young people on to the streets in this case (although I am not so sure about some of your colleagues). I ask again, is there anything you or your department can suggest to help this young woman avoid destitution."

That led to a helpful intervention—prompted by the Minister of State—by the local Department of Social Security office, which has been very helpful. It ingeniously trawled back through the records and discovered that Deborah was owed £152 in arrears of supplementary benefit, which it paid to her swiftly.

It proposed at first to offset that against repayments due on the social fund, which would not have been helpful, but the matter is now sorted out. The DSS has also agreed to suspend repayments of £2·91 a week, so I am grateful to the manager, Mr. Hutton, and his staff, whom I have found helpful in the case.

A new crisis now looms because of rent arrears. Deborah has received a notice of eviction. I have received great help from the borough council and she is not going to be evicted in the foreseeable future. It probably has a duty anyway under the Child Care Act 1980, and it might mean more public money being spent if she was evicted.

On 13 December, I received a further letter from the Minister of State in response to mine of 17 November, saying:

"Young people who are lone parents or who are disabled benefit from special premiums introduced in the new scheme, but those young people who are not in special categories cannot be considered a priority for resources."

The letter mentions that Deborah failed to turn up to collect the special arrears of benefit. I put it to the Minister that it is not likely that a young woman in those circumstances who was offered £152 would not turn up to collect it. The reason was that the letter from the DSS was sent to the wrong address and she knew nothing about it. The Minister's letter also states:

"You will be pleased to learn that action to recover the social fund loan has been suspended until April when Deborah reaches the age of 18."

That is something for her to look forward to on her 18th birthday.

There are no villains in this case. Deborah is not responsible for the situation. She is a responsible, thrifty young woman who managed until 11 September by allocating her meagre resources carefully. The DSS in Sunderland has been extremely helpful; it is not the villain. The housing authority is doing its best to avoid eviction and it is not the villain. I would not suggest for one moment that the Minister and the Department are the villains, because they have attempted to help within the strict rules by which they are bound. They have all been victims of machinery which, once in motion, grinds inexorably on and which appears to be targeted against some of the poorest and least fortunate people in the land.

Surely Ministers have better things to do than to make life unbearable for a 17-year-old from a broken family who is doing her utmost to make ends meet in the face of great odds. The obvious solution is work—a job—but, in the land of more than 20 per cent. unemployment, that is not a realistic solution at the moment.

I have told the story of Deborah in the perhaps forlorn hope that it will arouse some twinges of conscience in Tory party supporters as they tuck into their Christmas dinners. Perhaps Tory Members will think more carefully before filing through the Lobby in support of the next turn of the screw; who knows?

What does the Minister think Deborah should do? She had 36p for food. Now that she does not have to repay the £2·91 a week that amount has increased to about £3·30. But how can she survive? I am sure that the Minister will want to join me in wishing Deborah a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year. I shall wish the Minister a happy Christmas, but I do not think that I need wish him a prosperous new year.

12.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) for initiating this Adjournment debate, and I begin by paying tribute to him for the assiduous way in which he has represented the interests of his constituent in this matter.

It may help if I recapitulate the facts of the case before us. Deborah is 17, and was in receipt of income support until 11 September this year. On that date, as the House will know, the Government withdrew entitlement to income support for those 16 to 17-year-olds not in an exempt category. Those exemptions covered, for example, the disabled and single parents. We made available instead a bridging allowance of £15 per week, payable for a maximum of eight weeks in any 12 months. Bridging allowance is paid by the Department of Employment on condition that a young person is registered for and is awaiting a YTS place.

The changes that we made to the income support entitlement of 16 and 17-year-olds are, of course, linked to our guarantee of the offer of a YTS place to all in the age group who want one. Deborah Hall claimed bridging allowance and this was paid, but on 19 September she started a YTS place with the springboard media project and qualified for the YTS training allowance of £29·50 a week.

It is gratifying to note that Deborah is on YTS. YTS offers the young people of this country a real chance to make a good start in life and to get training for skills and a recognised qualification that should stand them in good stead for the future. It is a voluntary scheme in that young people can choose whether to take up a training place, a job or stay on at school or further education. Only the option of living off the state is not available to those who are capable of work and training, as this is not an option that we believe is in the longer-term interests of anyone, especially young people.

There are 428,000 16 and 17-year-olds currently taking advantage of the opportunities that YTS offers. Leaving aside the advantages for the future, which I have already mentioned, the great majority of those on such schemes are considerably better off financially, as the training allowance of £29·50 a week in the first year and £35 in the second is much higher than the appropriate income support rate in the age group, which is £19·40.

It is also worth mentioning that the decision to remove general benefit entitlement from 16 and 17-year-olds was not a cost-cutting measure. DSS savings are offset by an increase in expenditure on the YTS programme, and the overall effect is an increase in expenditure on the youth of this country—an investment with which I am sure the hon. Gentleman would agree.

Although Deborah would have received the maximum housing benefit available—that is, 100 per cent. help with rent and 80 per cent. help with rates—when she was on income support and on the bridging allowance, when she obtained the YTS place, her housing benefit will have been recalculated to take into account her increased income. Under the new housing benefit system, the vast majority of the rules for calculating entitlement are common to income support and housing benefit.

The housing benefit system is designed to leave all tenants with at least their income support level to live on after meeting their eligible rent and rates. So Deborah's housing benefit will have been assessed by comparing her income with the basic personal allowance for a 16 or 17-year-old of £19·40 per week. This rate is common to both income support and housing benefit. The assessment is done using the standard housing benefit tapers of 65 per cent. for rent and 20 per cent. for rates. Therefore, Deborah receives housing benefit of £7·18 for rent and £1·65 for rates.

Before I make some general remarks about the system, I want to refer briefly to one further aspect of Deborah's case which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Deborah's mother applied for a single payment on her behalf last January. It was for towels, bedding and pots and pans, because Deborah had only recently obtained her tenancy and did not have those items. Unfortunately, the local office at the time had a very substantial backlog of cases to deal with because of a locally organised take-up campaign and her case was not dealt with until June. A single payment of £152 was then authorised.

Unfortunately—due, I think, to a misunderstanding between Deborah and the local office—it was never issued. That was not discovered until September, when the local office was considering the rescheduling of repayments on a subsequent loan from the social fund. Deborah has now received the single payment, and the local office has decided to defer, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, any further recovery of the loan until April, when Deborah reaches the age of 18.

I would be the first to acknowledge that the benefit system, especially as it affects young people living away from their family, does not give them a great deal to live on. However, it is important to explain why the system is structured as it is. The House will be aware, as I have already mentioned, that the new housing benefit system is essentially aligned with that for income support. The change was widely welcomed by outside commentators and results in a fairer and simpler structure. For the first time, all housing benefit cases are assessed on the basis of the same maximum entitlement to meet housing costs, so there is no need to introduce complexities into the scheme, such as the old housing benefit supplement.

The effect of the universal 100 per cent. start point for rent is to give more help where rents are unavoidably high, and, for the first time, full protection against reasonable rent rises for all those on benefit. Those changes, together with the fact that we now assess on net, not gross, income, justify the fact that we now withdraw help with rent faster as income rises.

I acknowledge that the fundamental reform of the system will have caused considerable differences in housing benefit entitlement at the point of change, because the payments were arbitrarily different before. That is why transitional payments were made available for those in vulnerable groups. I also acknowledge that the changes especially affect young householders. The reason is simply that, with the alignment of income support, and with the abolition of householder status within income support, both income support and housing benefit rates must reflect the characteristics of young people as a whole rather than differentiate between householders and non-householders.

The essential characteristic of young people, especially in the 16 to 17-year age group, is that they live at home with their parents. Therefore, the only way to help people like Deborah who live away from their parents would also be to give an incentive generally for people to move away from home. We recognise that there are circumstances in which people do have to move out, but we would not want to create such an incentive. Moreover, it is a basic principle of the benefit system that help should be targeted accurately on those who need it most. That means the old, the disabled, and families with children. That means also that young fit people without dependants have to be lower down our list of priorities.

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

I conclude by reiterating that we do have a real concern for this particular group of young people who, for one reason or another, cannot live at home. The Government have given a commitment to monitoring the effects of the reforms and we shall of course be looking at the effect the changes are having on this group as well as others. If changes are necessary, and if changes are sensible within the basic simpler structure, the Government will make them.

Broomhills Psychotherapy Unit, Bexley Hospital

12.30 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the issue of the work of the Broomhills psychotherapy unit at Bexley hospital with the House and with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health. I had experience of his competence, concern and judgment when I was a Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Ministry of Defence. I congratulate him on his new appointment and I wish him well in his key role.

The Broomhills unit is not in my constituency, nor is it within either of the health districts that cover the Sevenoaks constituency. My particular interest in its work arises because my wife, who has spent 30 years as a psychiatric social worker, is attached to Broomhills as the unit's social worker employed by Bexley council.

Having declared that interest, it should not, I hope, be held against my arguments, but rather viewed as one of the many ways in which hon. Members become interested, involved and knowledgeable about so many aspects of life in Britain.

Broomhills lies within the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), and friend he is. We nursed our respective seats together and entered the House together. We continue to work together on much common ground. The future of Broomhill is one example. He has asked me to say that he fully supports the points that I shall make today and I confirm that he has already been active in pursuing the objectives that I shall outline.

Broomhills is a therapeutic community, managed by Bexley health authority in the grounds of Bexley hospital on the border of greater London and Kent. It is located in the old medical superintendent's house on the perimeter of the hospital's grounds and has its own entrance. It provides facilities for up to 18 patients who stay at the unit from Monday to Friday, returning home at weekends.

Broomhills aims to help severely disturbed people to understand their problems and find more healthy and adaptive ways of dealing with their lives and relationships. Treatment is primarily, but not exclusively, psychodynamic. It takes place daily in community meetings, group psychotherapy, art therapy and individual sessions facilitated by appropriate members of the multi-disciplinary staff team.

As a therapeutic community, the treatment concentrates not only on work in groups but on the aspects of daily life which offer opportunities for social learning. That form of treatment avoids the use of medicinal drugs. All the domestic work—shopping, cooking and cleaning—is carried out by the patients. There are no domestic staff, which keeps costs down and prepares people for a full return to the community.

Broomhills' staff work with a broad range of patients, including those suffering from various neurotic disorders, personality disorders, and what may be termed borderline psychoses. Typically, most patients referred to Broomhills have a long-standing psychiatric history that may include contact with general acute services through episodes of overdosing and self-mutilation.

The key point I make is that the object of this therapeutic community is to break the revolving door

syndrome of more traditional interventions, so that readmission is rare and minimal psychiatric follow-up is needed. The success of that approach is shown by the fact that, over the past five years, eight out of 10 patients attending Broomhills have not required readmission or psychiatric aftercare.

I turn to the experiences and views of some of the patients themselves. I hope that my hon. Friend will find them interesting and worthwhile. All the Government's efforts at improving the Health Service are surely designed to improve delivery of services to the patients themselves. Therefore, I believe that the patients and their families should speak for themselves in the House today.

One former patient writes:

"Before arriving at Broomhills I had already been a patient in two hospitals. My treatment was ECT and tranquillisers. In the short term my treatment was successful. But as time passed on I was still unable to cope with my life. I feel that Broomhills worked because it was more of a common endeavour, therefore allowing patients to exhibit odd behaviour. I know by my experiences in an ordinary ward I would probably have received more pills for odd behaviour. But instead, with warmth and acceptance, I was able to release and work through difficult feelings. This was an extremely important part of my recovery. My quality of life is now far richer and I am able to live it less painfully. In fact, I can now move on to help others as a social work assistant. I know that if I had not had the chance to experience Broomhills, I would still be unable to cope with my life and still be dependent on the National Health Service. I feel privileged to have spent a year of my life in a place which holds so much warmth and commitment and in particular dedication from the staff. Broomhills is a valuable place."

Another former patient's mother writes:

"I am Anne's mother and I am writing on her behalf because she no longer lives here—in fact, she married a steady, reliable young man in July last year and they are buying a house . . . something I would have thought impossible at the time she came to you. It would appear that your help at that troubled period of Anne's life has contributed greatly to this change in her attitude of life."

Another former patient who is now a solicitor writes:

"I have personal knowledge of the value of the unit, having been a patient there for approximately 20 months two years ago. My stay at Broomhills provided me with, I believe, a very necessary respite . . . Since leaving Broomhills, I have started my own solicitors' practice, and also do some locum work. I have, amongst other things, learnt to drive. Quite to my surprise, I discovered an ability to design, make and sell . . . ceramic figurines. Having recommenced playing chess at Broomhills (after a gap of many years) . . . I have found that I am a fairly strong club player. Finally, I now do a significant amount of both paid and voluntary work for The Project for the Mentally Handicapped in Camberwell Road and at an ILEA youth club 'Fast Forward' in Peckham, both concerned with handicapped children and young adults. Broomhills was valuable to me in many ways. It provided me with a place where I could belong—it is not too strong to say it was, for me, a home in the best sense of the word—at a time when I felt desolate. That is not to say that it was easy to stay at Broomhills or that it was some sort of soft option—quite the reverse. Broomhills was for me a highly stressful place to be at, both because of the many, varied, and often conflicting personalities there, and because of the daily group and other work. On the other hand, since it was opened only during weekdays, and we patients went home from Friday afternoon until Monday morning, contact was not lost with life in 'the real world'. Indeed, such contact was encouraged . . . Broomhills is, after all, very much the sort of comunity orientated service that is apparently, as it should be, encouraged by the government."

Those letters speak for themselves. They make our case for us.

Broomhills also provides a valued and well-used training resource. Student and pupil nurses are regularly attached to the unit, and staff from other professional disciplines and agencies attend as part of their specialist training.

Hon. Members will have noted that the patient in my last example said that it was not easy to stay at Broomhills —that it was no soft option. Assuredly it is not. The assessment process is a very careful one, and is followed by a two-week trial period during which the patient stays at the unit. Commitment to use, to contribute to and abide by the rules of the community are absolute requirements for patients. Group pressure, guided and controlled by the staff with warmth and dedication, is the key factor in achieving long-term progress, and giving patients the ability to return to an active life in their communities is the end product.

What, then, is the present difficulty? Until now, Bexley has been the management organisation running Broomhills, and it continues to do so. Patients have been referred to it from Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham, but Greenwich and Lewisham are now likely to withdraw their funding owing to financial constraints. For one district health authority to continue to fund a centre for 18 patients in such a specialist area would not continue to make sense. We now need to market the Broomhills unit. It is a very cost-effective service: a charge of £8,000 per patient for a treatment programme lasting approximately a year is astonishingly cheap compared with other similar units in other parts of the country, of which there are relatively few.

The staff of the unit, supported by Bexley health authority, have taken action to make the unit's work more widely known. My debate is part of that effort, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to set this type of work within the context of the Government's policy of care in the community for the mentally ill. Broomhills seems to me an ideally suited staging post; surely it must have an enlarging rather than a diminishing role.

So many times in recent months we have debated changes in arrangements—for tests on teeth and eyes, family allowances or social security benefits—and I have supported the Government. Those changes have been designed to ensure that those in the most need are given support and provided with effective treatment. Improved National Health Service structures and pressure to improve management effectiveness have all been designed as part of Government policy to target funds on those who need them most.

May I summarise the key factors that make the Broomhills unit unusual and say why it should become a facility that is supported by and made available to health authorities and their patients throughout the south-east region and other parts of London. A patient goes all the way from the midlands to Broomhills on a weekly basis. That is possible because a weekly residential system is used. It is a rare residential facility for emotionally damaged people. It falls outside the mainstream of the normal treatment for mental illness. These people suffer from severe depression, crippling anxiety states, suicide attempts, self-mutilation and neurosis. The five-day week discourages institutionalism, maintains contact with families and the community and is part of community care. Patients learn to understand their deep-seated problems through group work and through the rest of the programme. Drugs are not used—a great financial saving, as well as avoiding the problems of addiction that occur in

[Mr. Mark Wolfson]

other people who are undergoing long-term drug therapy. I have already said that readmission is rare, either to Broomhills or to other psychiatric units. Patients learn to live together and run the unit completely for themselves. Surely that is good and sensible practice. It leads to their return to the community and, as I have been able to read out with some excitement today, to a return to valued work by many ex-patients. Again I emphasise that it is a very low-cost unit.

The staffing levels, because of the involvement of patients and because treatment does not have to be provided on a one-to-one basis, are low and help to keep costs down. The training facility, too, is important. It is used for training nurses and social workers and for training art therapists, psychologists and psychotherapists.

After leaving Broomhills, patients often return to their old jobs, or find new ones. Some seek retraining through disablement resettlement officers and the resettlement training schemes. Others return to interrupted university or college studies, while others have started GCSE courses as adult entrants so that they may qualify for places later in polytechnics. There are a few similar facilities in the London area—at Henderson hospital, the Cassel hospital, the Ingham centre and to some extent the Maudsley hospital, but Broomhills has its own contribution to make. It is a uniquely useful contribution that should be made more widely available and that should not run the risk of closure.

12.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) for his kind words on my new appointment. I look forward to being closely involved with the challenges facing the Health Service at the national level, but I am also well aware that, locally, plans for the delivery of services can be very sensitive. That is shown by, among other things, the large number of debates on local health issues. I think that I shall be a frequent visitor to the Dispatch Box. I think that this week I have already appeared at the Dispatch Box more often than I did during the months that I spent as a Ministry of Defence Minister.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks on securing this Adjournment debate. I know that he is very assiduous in pursuing the interests of his constituents in local health matters in debates and in correspondence with my ministerial colleagues. I quite understand that he is raising not simply a constituency matter, but a much wider regional issue. They are very important matters and I am pleased that he has had the opportunity to raise them. It must surely be a mark of a civilised society, with all the pressures and strains on our citizens, that we are able properly to deal with those with mental illness and to return them to the community to play an active role, if that is possible. The National Health Service has a very important part to play in that process.

The work of the Broomhills unit and its future have been brought to Ministers' attention not only by my hon. Friend, but during the past few months by correspondence from my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) in whose constituency the unit lies, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes). I have received correspondence from those right hon. and hon. Members recently, and following this Adjournment debate I shall be writing to them more fully.

It might be helpful if I first say something about policy on the planning of psychotherapy services. Psychotherapy services can range from any form of psychological treatment without drugs to very specialised treatment such as that being provided at Broomhills. Most psychotherapy treatment is provided not by designated psychotherapists but by various mental health professionals as part of their general work. In those circumstances, it would not be appropriate for the Department of Health to prescribe a particular organisation of psychotherapy services. I know that my hon. Friend agrees with that. It is a matter for clinical judgment, not ministerial directive, as to how mentally ill patients should be treated. It is up to individual district health authorities to develop their own models of how patients should be treated and make available the necessary resources. I strongly agree with my hon. Friend about emphasising the importance of the patient. The patient must come first. In this case we are dealing with mentally ill patients, a very important part of the wide spectrum of patients treated by the National Health Service which should always be orientated towards patient care. The patient is first and last on our list of priorities.

I repeat that it must be for individual health authorities to develop their own model of service, taking into account the local demand and the resources available. The major need for psychotherapy comes from those who are best treated on a day case or out-patient basis, although a very small number need in-patient psychotherapy treatment. The trend in local provision of services therefore appears to be away from in-patient treatment to community provision on a district basis. I understand that the Royal College of Psychiatrists has been developing a document recommending a full district-based psychotherapy service.

The work of the Broomhills unit, which my hon. Friend has described so well, has to be considered within that context. As my hon. Friend has explained, the future of the unit is jeopardised by the fact that Greenwich health authority and Lewisham and North Southwark health authority have decided to develop their own psychotherapy services. I do not criticise those health authorities for doing that. They are following the trend which I have explained. Greenwich, which has been the main user of the unit, referring about seven to 10 patients per year, is developing community-based services for mentally ill people based on new mental health centres, which will provide psychotherapy. Lewisham and North Southwark has referred only six patients to Broomhills in the last five years. It has its own 12-bed psychotherapy community ward at Guy's hospital. It is planning to increase psychotherapy consultant services by four more in February 1989 and is very much advocating community psychotherapy in the future.

Only last month Bexley health authority, which manages the Broomhills unit, published a consultative document on the future organisation of mental illness services in the district. In that document it saw the development of psychotherapy as being integrated into the mainstream of community services. The document also details a service in which hospital-based care will be part

of a wider range of community and residential facilities, leading to an accessible and flexible service. The plan recognises that most individuals with mental health problems are already managed in the community by general practitioners, families and other carers and it is proposed that their contribution should be fully recognised and supported.

I stress that the psychotherapy services in general in those districts are not being lost. Rather they are being developed in an alternative way on a more local basis. I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome that, as he and I believe that there are many different ways of treating patients in this area. That is not to belittle what the Broomhills unit does—perhaps it underlines its contribution.

It is recognised that the Broomhills unit provides a service that is not widely available. I recognise that it is committed to the multi-disciplinary team approach to treating disturbed people. The unit bears the imprint of Dr. Edward Herst, the consultant psychiatrist, and I pay tribute to him and all members of his staff for their expertise and the valuable service that they provide.

For those reasons, Bexley health authority wishes the unit to continue if there is a demand for its services. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it would be unreasonable for Bexley to continue to run the unit for only a few patients. That would not be cost-effective. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the health authority on its positive action in marketing the unit to the four Thames regional health authorities to see whether there is a wider demand for its services. That is a sensible, positive and constructive step. I have seen the authority's information leaflet and am very impressed with it. The authority's actions have the full support of staff at the unit. I, too, hope that there is a favourable response from other health authorities to this vigorous marketing. It is a good example of the entrepreneurial approach that we wish in the NHS.

I understand that responses have been requested by 20 January next year. If those efforts are unsuccessful, I have been told that Bexley will consider approaching authorities outside the Thames regions. I am convinced that Bexley health authority is doing its utmost to ensure the continuation of the unit.

Mr. Wolfson: I am glad that my hon. Friend mentioned the timetable involved and Bexley's readiness to be flexible in looking for a wider market than the one it initially circulated. But there may be a problem with the timing. There was some administrative delay in producing the brochure—one can understand how that happens—and 30 days may not be long enough to obtain a response. We may need a little longer.

Mr. Freeman: I fully understand that.

If the district is not as successful in its marketing strategy as we would all hope, it will be for the district to decide what level and type of psychotherapy service it should provide, and it would be wrong for me to anticipate any such decision now. However, it is clear that Bexley health authority, the South East Thames regional health authority and fellow hon. Members all want the unit to continue, and Bexley health authority has been active in trying to secure the support necessary from other health authorities. I hope that it is successful and that it takes the time necessary to do that. My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks fully and comprehensively described the unit. He will appreciate the many pressures on my time, but I shall arrange soon to visit Bexley health authority and the Broomhills unit.

I take this opportunity to wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, a happy Christmas. I also wish my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks, his constituents and those at the Broomhill unit a happy Christmas and prosperous and healthy new year.

Employees (Vetting)

12.59 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I join in that salutation to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and add my mourning to that already expressed about the tragic air crash. It is something with which those of us who are about to take off for India, Hong Kong and Australia identify. We deeply mourn what has happened to others and pray that it will not be a precedent.

The debate, which I am glad to be able to instigate, concerns the vetting of employees who are seeking work or who are at work. My hon. Friends and I who are concerned about this subject accept that vetting is proper for security matters, but believe that it should be done in an intelligent and recognised way by those who are responsible; it is a Government job to vet people on security grounds.

When vetting people who are seeking work, employers are entitled to exercise their powers of discrimination but not to discriminate on the grounds of sex, race or trade union membership. It is wrong for them to turn to private, secret shadowy organisations such as the Economic League, which hoards information that it does not allow any independent organisation to see. I hope that, as a result of today's debate, the Government will institute an independent inquiry into the operation of such organisations, especially the Economic League.

The Economic League is known to be the key organisation in this sector. I am pleased to say that, at its meeting yesterday, the Select Committee on Employment laid on the table a letter received by hand from the Economic League dated 20 December. I have spoken to Mr. Michael Noar, the Economic League's director general, who has no objection to it being placed before the House. The letter refers to subscribers but says that the Economic League does not publish a list of them; it is secret. It is known that many of the subscribers are major companies and that none of them subscribes to any political party other than the Conservative party. Many of the 2,000 companies that Mr. Noar says belong to the organisation do not declare their gifts to this evil organisation but launder them, and I ask the Government to conduct an independent inquiry to investigate its funding.

The debate is not about Reds creeping out from under the bed or, as Mr. Noar suggests, a "Communist-backed campaign" against the Economic League. I have been accused of much wickedness, but never of being Communist or Communist-backed.

It is extraordinary to consider the people who have been pinpointed by this organisation. Among hon. Members are my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), a well-known militant; my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), who told me that it has a file on him because in 1972 he addressed a meeting of War Resisters International, but he can think of more wicked ways to behave than that; my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who is not exactly on the far Left of any party; and that well-known extremist, my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). Ninety per cent. of those who are known to be on the list because of leakages are Left-wing activists. I shudder to think what the list says about you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do not wish to give anything away, but in the same letter Mr. Noar said:

"any individual who believes that he or she may appear in the League's records is free to check with us and be told precisely what information, if any, is held."

I applied and was told that the Economic League was fairly sure that there was nothing on the computer, but if I sent £10 an official search would be conducted. The league's letter said, in words to this effect, "We keep a list of Labour Members of Parliament and that is all that appears to be there about you."

I asked Mr. Noar whether it was possible to obtain copies of the Economic League's information and was told that that was much too expensive but might be done if individuals requested it. I appeal to any member of the public, trade unionist or hon. Member who feels strongly that people should not be subjected to the scrutiny of advisers and company spies who hide behind a well-financed organisation of this sort to ask what is held on him or her. It is difficult to find out what goes on, but there have been some inquiries.

Among those who have been defamed and whose lives have been made thoroughly wretched because of the disclosures is Mr. Kenneth Williamson, chairman of a campaign to stop an Oxford hospital for the elderly from being closed, who was on the list as a troublemaker. Mr. Sydney Scroggie, a blind pensioner from Dundee who wrote a letter to his local newspaper supporting Edinburgh city council's decision to buy—this is very wicked—a portrait of Nelson Mandela, was also on the list. Richard Stokes, a former personnel manager who was approached by an Economic League official while working for Glaxo, was told:

"The important thing really is to make sure that they didn't omit any subversives."

There does not seem to be any concern about the lives, work and jobs of innocent people on the list and the damage done to them.

Mr. Stokes noted that Dame Olga Ovarov CBE, a distinguished veterinary scientist who worked for Glaxo, was on the list. When he asked why, he received this reply: "anybody with a Russian name would come under scrutiny." I wonder whether that would hold true today. I look back at my ancestors and am glad that my name does not sound Russian.

A former regional director of the league, Mr. Richard Brett, said that he thought that the league's central register was "chaotic" and "more fiction than fact". Presumably, reputable companies go to the league for information. I wonder whether they realise that the register which is consulted is "chaotic" and "more fiction than fact".

A solicitor, Derek Ogg, was branded an "anarchist" because he was the editor of a fringe magazine on sale in anarchist bookshops apparently aimed at Edinburgh's gay community. He had a very sinister political involvement —he was a member of the Conservative party. Indeed, he was a candidate in the regional and district council elections and was chairman of the Young Conservatives in his constituency for two magnificent years. He, too, was on the list.

I wonder whether the Minister is on the list. In charge as he is of tourism, he brings in people from east European countries. I know that, in his hidden way, he has been helping to get tourists to come here from Communist

China. He should carefully look at what the Economic League has on him. I invite him, as part of his independent inquiry, to ask about himself. There are one or two very doubtful characters on the Conservative Benches behind him who are probably also on the list. If the league knew a little of what I know about them, their political reputation might be harmed. One is a member of the Institute of Personnel Management and the other is a member of a Select Committee—it would be a sub-committee anywhere else—who agrees with me on occasions

A 1986 official publication of the Economic League entitled "Companies under Attack" identifies a range of organisations that are

"unduly influenced by political aims"

and therefore virtually Communist fronts. These include the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and such extreme left-wing bodies as Oxfam, War on Want, Christian Aid and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

This organisation is effectively and seriously inefficient, chaotic and rotten, and sensible companies should not waste shareholders' money upon it. Shareholders should demand that the companies in which they are involved do not pour money into it. It is a pernicious, insidious, modern McCarthyite body which haunts the shadows of the world of industrial relations, causing damage which it cannot prove to innocent people's reputations.

If the Data Protection Act 1974 extended—alas, it does not—to non-automatically processed personnel data, access might be obtained. We know—because it has told us—that the league keeps automatically processed data to a minimum. There is no way in which we can find out what it has on us.

As a Christmas gesture of good will to innocent, good people seeking jobs in the new year, will the Government undertake—I seek no more than that—to examine the possibility of an inquiry, sparked off by the Department of Employment? That would reassure the public and the shareholders whose money has been put into the organisation, often without their knowledge. Also, hopefully it would put an end to wicked political vetting that is done secretly by private organisations, as opposed to proper vetting done publicly by those whose job it is to do so and who are responsible to the public if they make a mistake that causes harm.

1.12 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, West): I wish to associate myself with the expressions of sympathy for the victims of the tragic air disaster.

This debate is about human rights. Individuals should be able to apply for a job and be judged on accurate information and not, as seems to be happening according to articles in newspapers such as *The Observer* and the *Financial Times*—hardly Left-wing journals—on inaccurate, secret and biased information. Such a procedure is even more insidious and more dangerous to society than salmonella in eggs. We need, from the Department of Employment, somebody with the courage of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) to stand up for those who are so disadvantaged.

In the north-west, 6,000 people are on the Economic League black list and the figures of companies involved range from 300 to 200. It is all too easy in an area with high unemployment, where many people are applying for jobs, to reject an applicant without looking too deeply into whether information on which a decision is based is accurate. If people are being adjudged, they have a fundamental right to know that the information about them is accurate. If the information is wrong, there should be a state apparatus that allows one to defend one's rights and honour.

I hope that the Minister will at some time enshrine in legislation the employee protection—for prospective employees and those already in employment. A meaningful step forward would be to extend the Data Protection Act 1984 to files and card indexes. One of the insidious features of the Economic League is that, although it honours the letter of the law, it defiles its spirit. That is why we must seek redress. I am concerned that companies can avoid telling their shareholders and customers that they are contributing to an organisation such as the Economic League.

Perhaps the real subversives are those who, under the cloak of freedom and defence of democracy, charge people, find them guilty and condemn them, without the individual having the right to answer the charge. That is the real subversion of the British way of life and of everything for which this House stands.

1.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): First, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you a very happy Christmas, even though I do not give you mistletoe as the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) did. Nevertheless, my good wishes are sincere.

I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for raising this matter. It is an important issue on which there has been a good deal of misunderstanding of late. I welcome the opportunity to clarify the issues that are involved and to state clearly the Government's position.

Essentially, there are two aspects that we must consider. The first aspect is the way in which employers decide which individuals to recruit to their businesses, and that is a matter for the Department of Employment. The second aspect is the collection and storage of personal data, where my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has the main interest.

There have been suggestions that the employment service might have made use of information held by the Economic League before submitting job applicants to an employer. I wish to make it clear at the outset that it is not the policy of the employment service—nor has it ever been—to use the services of the Economic League or of any similar organisation. Employers place vacancies with the employment service and the function of the service is to assess the suitability of a potential applicant to carry out the activities of the job in question.

I shall clarify the obligations of employers when they decide to recruit someone to their business. Provided that they do not offend the laws against race or sex discrimination, they are free to choose how to go about selecting and recruiting new employees. There is nothing odd about that. After all, it is employers who know their own businesses best. It is reasonable that they should be able to choose who they wish to employ. They may, for example, decide to seek information on an individual from an independent source. I see nothing wrong with that. It is

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a generally accepted practice that prospective employees should supply a reference from, among others, their former employer as to their suitability for a certain job.

There is another important reason why employers should have the freedom to recruit who and how they wish. Too many restrictions would add to the burdens on business and tend to make employers reluctant to take on new recruits. We know that that would have a disastrous effect on new employment opportunities and the unemployed.

There are organisations such as the Economic League that have set themselves up as providers of information, and there is nothing unlawful about that. Equally, there is nothing unlawful about employers choosing to use such information to reach recruitment decisions if that is what they wish to do.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend say whether it is lawful to give false and malicious information?

Mr. Lee: I shall come to that. I ask my hon. Friend to bear with me.

My previous remarks do not mean that there are no restrictions on the activities of organisations such as the Economic League. Those who provide this sort of information bear a heavy responsibility to ensure that it is accurate. Equally, employers who use such information should satisfy themselves of its quality and accuracy, perhaps by asking for a second opinion from a reliable source.

As I have said, it is my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary who has the main responsibility for data protection considerations. However, I shall attempt to explain the current legislation and I shall ensure that any points with which I am unable to deal are brought to the attention of my colleagues in the Home Office.

For individuals who believe that information that is held about them on computer is incorrect, extensive remedies are available under data protection legislation. As hon. Members will know, all data users who hold and process personal data are required automatically to register with the Data Protection Registrar. Data subjects have the right of access to data about them on payment of a fee of up to £10 a record. The registrar will assist any individual who has a complaint against a data user and will investigate any case in which he considers that the data protection principles have been infringed. He may issue an enforcement notice to the data user, who has a right of appeal to the data protection tribunal and thence the courts. Some data users who have not registered have been prosecuted.

It is true that data protection legislation does not cover manually held records, and I shall return to that point in a moment. At this stage, I want to clarify what remedies already exist. In addition to the statutory right that I have outlined, it would be open to someone who has evidence of misinformation being supplied about him to mount an action for damages in the civil courts.

The Opposition have made a number of suggestions about what the Government might do to deal with what they perceive to be a problem. It has been suggested that the Government should set up a review of employers' recruitment and vetting practices, but I am not clear how such a review would help us. The Government believe that employers must have the freedom to decide how to recruit to their work force, providing that they respect the laws on sexual and racial discrimination. Employers have always been free to take up confidential references on prospective employees, and there is nothing wrong with that. It is employers who can best decide how to achieve their recruitment objectives.

Mr. Holt: If people can go to court on a civil action, as my hon. Friend said, can they receive legal aid and, if not, are the Government considering offering it?

Mr. Lee: With great respect, that is not a question that I have the immediate knowledge to answer. I shall see that an answer is obtained, and I shall write to my hon. Friend.

New legislation on these matters is neither necessary nor desirable.

Another suggestion is that the activities of supplies of information should be regulated. Legislation would be necessary to make it an offence for an individual or organisation to supply false information to an employer on a prospective employee or to supply information without the knowledge of that employee. The legislation, therefore, would require the organisation to inform the individual concerned to give him or her the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies. That is an impracticable suggestion because the proposal is patently unenforceable, and unenforceable law is bad law.

Another proposal is that the use by employers of information provided by organisations such as the Economic League should be regulated. It has been suggested that that could be done by requiring employers who propose to use such information to inform job applicants that such information is being sought. Again, that is a wholly impracticable and undesirable suggestion. I have already made it clear that the Government's view is that employers should be free to decide whom to recruit, provided they do not break the law on sexual or racial discrimination. Again, I doubt whether such provisions could be enforced, and there is no point in having an unenforceable law.

It has been suggested that it should be made illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of their political or religious views, in the same way that it is illegal to discriminate against people on the grounds of sex or race. I must emphasise that the Government are opposed to any form of unfair discrimination. Such discrimination is not only morally wrong, but economically stupid. Employers should recruit the best person for the job.

The Government's policy on discrimination on the basis of race or sex is backed by legislation because the scale of the problem merited such action. It is not clear that there is widespread abuse, in terms of political or religious discrimination, that would merit specific legislation, although discrimination in general is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

I have dealt with suggestions that would affect employment law. I come now to the suggestion that the data protection legislation is defective, in that it does not cover manually held records and that that loophole should be remedied. I understand from correspondence in the past 24 hours that the Economic League is considering computerising some of its records.

Mr. Janner: Oh?

Mr. Lee: I understood that a letter setting out that possibility had been conveyed to the hon. and learned Gentleman, and a copy was sent to me. I shall show it to the hon. and learned Gentleman after the debate.

I have already made it clear that this is a matter not for me but for my Home Office colleagues. Have Opposition Members really thought about the practicalities of the suggestion? It is relatively straightforward to give someone a printout of computerised information, as it usually consists of specific items of information in summary form. Moreover, the Data Protection Act provides safeguards in relation to information held on computer, requiring it to be relevant, accurate and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is held.

Imagine the difficulties in providing for a system of access to manual records analogous to that provided for data processed automatically. Manual files relating to individuals would have to be weeded to ensure that the subject saw only information relevant to him. It would be necessary to provide accommodation to enable him to read the file and supervision might be necessary to ensure that nothing was removed or altered. Thus, the resource costs involved would be considerable.

Computerised data can be sought and transmitted very easily and speedily. That was one of the main considerations that led first to the provisions in the European convention on the protection of individuals dealing with automatic processing of personal data and subsequently to our domestic data protection legislation. The same does not apply to manual records.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West made a number of allegations, and similar allegations have been made in the media and elsewhere. It is certainly not for me to defend the activities of an independent organisation, but I should like to place on record that, following the "World in Action" programme in February 1987, the Home Secretary asked North Yorkshire police to investigate the allegations that the Economic League had access to police information. No evidence was produced to support those allegations, and Home Office Ministers do not consider that any further police investigation of the league is warranted following allegations made in subsequent programmes. The Data Protection Registrar also received a number of complaints and discussed with the league the general question of the use of personal information. No evidence was discovered of any offence under the Data Protection Act.

I shall conclude——

Mr. Janner: Before the Minister moves on, will he be kind enough to consider my request—the only request that I have made—that he consult the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Employment as to whether an independent inquiry could be set up? Someone independent could then go in and look at the files of the organisation and satisfy the Government, if it was the case, that there was no impropriety. I would hope that the league would not object and that the Government would do that. If the Government will not do it, there must be some reason that I am sure the Minister would not wish to contemplate.

Mr. Lee: I shall consider the hon. and learned Gentleman's request and convey our conclusions to him in due course.

I want to conclude by saying something about the state of industrial relations, as the debate concerns the effects on industrial relations of employers' recruitment practices. Over the nine years that have elapsed since the Government came to power, the number of days lost through strikes has decreased dramatically. The figures for 1987 show that 3·5 million days were lost in that way compared with almost 27·5 million in 1979. It is clear that the Government's policies—particularly the step-by-step trade union reforms—have contributed significantly to the new realism that has become the dominant feature of our industrial relations.

I have already referred briefly to the effects of excessive regulation on employment opportunities. I emphasise that once more by drawing attention to the most recent unemployment figures, which show that unemployment is at its lowest since April 1981. Long-term unemployment is at its lowest level for more than five years and is falling faster than unemployment generally. As an hon. Member who represents one of the regions, I find it most encouraging that unemployment in the regions has fallen very fast—I am thinking particularly of the fall in unemployment in the midlands, Wales and the north-west.

The number of job vacancies registered at jobcentres has remained high throughout the year. Indeed, we calculate that, presently, about 700,000 job opportunities are available. I am convinced that our deregulation policy has significantly contributed to that improvement. Sweeping away unnecessary red tape has helped create conditions in which enterprise can flourish and employers are encouraged to recruit.

I can only conclude that the sort of proposals for further legislation which we have heard about would represent a return to the stifling red tape which we have so successfully removed, and that they would have only a detrimental effect on employment opportunities.

Environmental Protection

1.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The purpose of this debate is to draw attention, by the use of a particular example, to a set of general propositions that I hope will engage the interest of the Minister, to whom I am grateful for his courtesy in responding to this debate at a time when even Ministers must be thinking wistfully that it would be better to be at home.

Present policies and attitudes towards the environment must change immediately, or the grandchildren of today's policy makers stand a real chance of never having grandchildren. This is one of the last debates before Christmas, and I believe that it would be a remarkably fine Christmas present, both to this country and to the world, if we could be assured that—following the Prime Minister's growing interest in this subject—the Department of the Environment, and the Government generally, would take a much more positive role in protecting the environment and in changing public attitudes towards it.

The Government have a truly remarkable record of raising the British people's standards of living, and they are right to be proud of that. Now they must ensure that a much higher proportion of this nation's growing affluence is spent on ensuring that future generations, here and in other parts of the world, have something left to enjoy—and, indeed, are here to enjoy it.

In less than 90 years, our world has already warmed up by 0·5 deg. C. That does not sound very much, but it is enough to cause anxiety. The record for the warmest year in global surface air temperatures has been broken four times in this decade alone—in 1980, 1981, 1983 and 1987. If it continues to do so at the present projected rate, Bangladesh, among other countries, will entirely disappear and many thousands of British citizens will be made homeless by flooding around the major estuaries and elsewhere.

It is a matter of will to do something about it. By the year 2020, the developed nations could reduce per capita energy consumption by as much as 50 per cent. That would, of course, dramatically alter the present position, which I believe to be almost obscene, of 15 per cent. of the world's population consuming 85 per cent. of the world's energy.

On the whole, huge Government programmes involving millions of pounds are not the answer. The individual must be directly involved and the best way to do that is through his or her personal bill. Water privatisation is a step in the right direction. Water will cost each of us, as consumers, more than it has in the past. Provided those higher charges are spent on preventing pollution from reaching the sources of supply and on preventing our sewage from poisoning the earth and sea, consumers will understand. We need to do the same for electricity.

It is obscene that the power generating industries should be permitted to contribute as much acidity—or more—to the atmosphere than any comparable industry in the developed world. Our plans for controlling CEGB power stations' emissions are too feeble and much too slow. The price of electricity must include the price of protecting the atmosphere, and the Department of the Environment has a duty to become involved.

The same is true of cars. It should be illegal to build or sell a new car in Britain which is not fitted with a catalytic converter or similar device. I am about to replace my car, and I shall make sure that my new car is appropriately adapted.

We know that our cars poison people, animals and trees, but we scarcely seem to care. Tax incentives to buy lead-free petrol are one small step in the right direction, but the hill of poison on which that little step has been taken is growing so steep so quickly that such a little step will scarcely be noticed.

Protecting the environment makes sense, not only in humane terms but in financial terms. Many of the hundreds of millions of pounds now being spent on rehabilitating the inner cities are needed because hundreds of millions of pounds were spent by earlier Governments on bribing businesses to leave the inner cities for green field sites outside. Their work forces followed and left behind only those least able to make a success of inner-city life.

One of the most exciting projects of which I have heard recently is one in which the Government have given Professor Alice Coleman a sum of money to put into effect her idea that many of the features that cause crime and anti-social behaviour can be designed out of housing estates. She has for a long time been a passionate champion of building more houses in the inner cities rather than on green field sites outside.

Just as families contain more than one generation, so does society. We have no business to condemn our grandchildren to an overheated, aluminium-saturated world of fishless lakes and treeless forests where no birds sing. If that is true—I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees with me in principle—it means that every development needs to be looked at with fresh eyes.

Take British Rail's proposal to run a new high-speed rail link to the Channel tunnel. Of course, I have a constituency axe to grind. My constituency contains a large part of Kent's only area of outstanding natural beauty—the national designation which stands second only to a national park. Through it runs the Pilgrims' way, hallowed for centuries by pilgrims visiting Thomas á Becket's tomb in Canterbury and still a resort of those seeking physical recreation or spiritual solace.

The villages along that face of the north downs are distinguished by their beauty and antiquity and the fierce pride with which they are cared for in the face of all modern pressures to deface them. For millions of people all over the world they represent the spirit of Kent: ancient settlements built on a human scale. Now they are all threatened by British Rail's proposed corridor for routes 1 and 2. New trains are intended to race along new tracks at 186 mph, emitting a sound comparable to that of a low-flying jet, well in excess of the highest noise levels permitted in factories by the Health and Safety Executive. The hope may be that we shall get used to it. Perhaps we shall. The trains will run every seven minutes.

We do not know how much noise the new trains will emit, because, six weeks away from deciding which route to follow, British Rail still has not been able to tell us. As far as I can see, it retained its expert only a few short weeks ago. I shall not weary my hon. Friend with details of the incompetence with which British Rail has presented its proposals to the people of Kent. It is well enough known for even British Rail's chairman to admit to me in a letter that it has led to a loss of confidence in British Rail.

To describe it in such mild terms is like describing the fall of Jericho as a case of wall fatigue. Suffice it to say that those living alongside routes 1 and 2 will not accept a high-speed train weaving in and out of an area of outstanding natural beauty, slicing through their villages on tracks that will often be a considerable distance from existing lines, wrecking houses, and destroying not only areas of special landscape importance but also a site of special scientific interest.

We are profoundly sceptical of British Rail's traffic projections, and contemptuous of its admissions that it has neither walked the route nor consulted modern maps. It will be remembered that in my constituency there is a new housing estate of whose existence British Rail was so unaware, because it had not bothered to walk the route, that it is now having to negotiate compensation terms with the estate's builder. We are angered beyond belief at the way in which British Rail presented its proposals for a £1·5 billion project, using techniques so amateurish that they would bring public contempt upon a small shopkeeper were he to use them to allay anxiety among his neighbours in the village street.

If Kent is not to be defiled by intolerable noise, physical disruption and unplanned consequential development, we need help—and we need it fast. For five months, thousands of home owners have lived under blight. We now face the prospect of being forced to accept British Rail's largest ever capital project, not on its merits but to rescue a number of home owners blighted by the proposal.

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister—and of all the Ministers in this Government, with his record in local government he scarcely needs reminding—that British Rail's proposals have been made by a state monopoly that has not thought them through, but that may get away with them because there is no alternative source of advice. What a strange situation for this Government, of all Conservative Governments, to find themselves in.

There should be established immediately an independent, multi-disciplinary body, possibly with advice from Swiss or German railways, say, who have at least built railway lines this century, to evaluate British Rail's proposals and the objections to them. At present, there exists only a process whereby angry, frightened laymen —albeit that they are often intelligent and well informed —try to take on a state monopoly that controls the flow of information and has a vested interest in gettings its own way.

I remind the Minister that the last large-scale technological project in which British Rail was involved was the advanced passenger train—a project that tilted into extinction after years of work and the expenditure of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. I ask my hon. Friend urgently to consider my suggestion. It would be usable for other future rail projects and perhaps for other purposes. My hon. Friend may say that those matters are for his right hon. and hon. Friends responsible for transport and not for him. I beg to differ. They are almost as much a matter for him as for Transport Ministers. I am dismayed that questions about the environment have been referred to Transport Ministers for attention only because they concern a train.

The Secretary of State for the Environment has a direct responsibility for areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest, and for the quality of the environment in general. He has, or he ought to have, an interest in how much noise is allowed to defile the countryside and in whether an undertaking shall be allowed to destroy natural springs—perhaps up to 10 per cent. of Kent's water supply—or threaten the purity of the water supply with track-cleaning chemicals and other pollutants.

I return to the point with which I began. My hon. Friend must take a direct interest in the nature of the world that we shall hand to future generations. British Rail wants its new train to travel at 186 mph. That will save a bare five minutes on the journey between London and Dover, but those five minutes demand a much noisier train running on tracks that cannot deviate to avoid a building, a natural feature or a collection of homes of especial value. How shall we account to our grandchildren if, as we travel ever further and faster to broaden our experience, the very devices that we use to achieve those speeds and distances ensure that there is nothing left to experience when we arrive at our destinations?

I should like my hon. Friend to declare, on this last parliamentary day of the old year, that he is prepared seriously to consider taking five minutes longer on a journey if by doing so he will help to preserve the environment in which we and our children live.

Let me take this opportunity of wishing my hon. Friend and his colleagues in the Department a very happy Christmas and an environmentally conscious new year.

1.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): May I reciprocate my hon. Friend's good wishes immediately? I hope that 1989 is also a good year for him and his constituents.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising these important issues. The state of the environment is very much in the forefront of people's minds at present, but it is not something to which the Government have only just turned their attention. We have consistently demonstrated our concern to protect the environment during our time in office, and in the past two years have quickened the pace of our environmental initiatives to tackle such problems as atmospheric and marine pollution. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reaffirmed the Government's strong commitment to the protection and enhancement of our environment in a speech to the Royal Society on 27 September, in which she described it as

"one of the greatest challenges of the late 20th century".

In this country, we are fortunate in enjoying high standards of environmental quality, not least because of the significant improvements that have been secured in recent times. That does not mean that further improvements must not be secured. My hon. Friend referred to the reduction of lead in the air as a result of cars being converted to take unleaded petrol. He said that he was setting an example by opting for unleaded fuel, and I am able to tell him that I have made a similar transition already this year. Most Government cars will be converted to take unleaded fuel. That is just a small example of the changes that must be made if we are to continue to enhance our environment.

We live in an industrial world, and to maintain and improve our standard of living we need factories, roads, power stations and, indeed, railway lines. It is naive to suggest that they can be provided without some consequence to the natural environment. Almost all development is subject to the planning system, and I can assure my hon. Friend that that system is not blind to its

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

duty to balance the need for development with the need to maintain the natural environment. An essential task for Government, local authorities and all public agencies concerned in the planning system is to ensure that adequate provision for development and economic growth is coupled with the effective conservation of the landscape, its wildlife and natural resources.

An important part of our natural heritage is safeguarded by a network of statutory designations: national nature reserves, sites of special scientific interest, areas of outstanding natural beauty and the like. In built-up areas local authorities can designate conservation areas where special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the area's character and appearance. We have introduced the requirement for environmental assessment of major development projects, and our system of public inquiries ensures that the environmental implications of major schemes are fully considered before decisions are made.

I recognise the particular concerns of the people of Kent. Their proximity to London, the M25 and the Channel tunnel means that they are subject to a unique series of development pressures. It is clear that many people wish to live in Kent, and it is not possible to respond to all those development pressures without some changes affecting both the built and the natural environment.

My hon. Friend is aware that the future of development in Kent came under close scrutiny in July, when the second review and alterations to the Kent structure plan were examined in public over a period of four weeks. The existing structure plan contains policies for the protection of the countryside, and the coast and the built environment. Amended built environment policies are included in the second review of the structure plan. While my hon. Friend will appreciate that it is too early for me to comment on the outcome of the structure plan review at the present time, he will of course take comfort from the fact that Kent's proposals left the countryside and coast policies unchanged.

Now, on top of other development pressures, Kent finds itself the subject of proposals for a high-speed rail link between the tunnel and central London. It is particularly unfortunate that the publication of British Rail's report on long-term route and terminal capacity for Channel tunnel train services should have given rise to a detailed discussion of the effects of specific track alignment and the effect upon individual properties, rather than British Rail's intention that the discussion should be broadly based and concerned with the relative merits and the environmental importance of three route corridors.

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport said in an Adjournment debate on 2 December, to which I was pleased to be able to listen, the routes shown on the map should be taken not as representing specific alignments but only as a general indication of the areas through which the alternative routes might pass. The choice of which route should be adopted and its precise alignment cannot be determined without further detailed design work and wider public discusson.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that any more specific discussion at this stage would be premature and inappropriate. British Rail is some way off deciding which route corridor might be chosen, but even when a route through one corridor is firmly proposed, there will still be the opportunity for further discussion on precise alignment within the corridor.

Inevitably, the publication by British Rail of its report has given rise to the utmost anxiety, and in some cases to distress and hardship, for people in Kent, including many of my hon. Friend's constituents. I can understand why some people may think that British Rail was wrong to publish its report in the way that it did, but had it not done so it would have been justifiably criticised for lack of openness and consultation. The fact that British Rail chose to reveal the options that it had under consideration and to consult widely among local authorities and others is in line with a process of open consideration of major planning issues that has been widely encouraged by all those with concern for the environment for more than two decades.

It is the process of prior consultation that exposes to rigorous examination the effect of development proposals of all kinds upon both the built and the natural environment. Of course, as in this case, it can be highly unpleasant for all those affected by one of the alternative routes proposed by British Rail. Nevertheless, British Rail must ensure that it has taken into account in considering the impact and relative merits of the three routes all relevant matters before it comes to a conclusion on a preferred route. In particular, it must be in a position to demonstrate that adequate weight has been given to environmental factors, including the effect upon the people of Kent.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport noted with regret during the earlier debate that, for a large number of people, their anxiety will prove to have been unnecessarily caused, in that only one line will be proposed, whereas at present the worry is spread along three route corridors. I support wholeheartedly his determination that the present uncertainty that is affecting parts of Kent should not be allowed to last any longer than is strictly necessary.

Mr. Rowe: I put to my hon. Friend a specific point, to which he may turn later. British Rail, which is a monopoly supplier in this country, has proposed the various routes and is also the holder of the criteria against which those routes are being evaluated. British Rail is the supplier of all the information, and as far as I can see it is the only major source of technical advice available to the Government. In those circumstances, those who have any reason whatsoever to be sceptical about some of British Rail's arguments feel powerless. Before my hon. Friend closes his helpful remarks, I hope that he will address the suggestion that another method of evaluating British Rail's proposals might be found.

Mr. Chope: I had intended to turn to that point. My hon. Friend can rest assured that British Rail will not be judge and jury in its own cause. One of my hon. Friend's points was whether a very high speed train rather than a slightly less fast train is justified. That is one of the balancing factors that will have to be taken into account when assessing whether the rail link has to be at the maximum speed or at a lower speed so that noise is reduced. The balancing factors will have to be assessed in this case and in all planning applications.

The sooner that British Rail is able to identify the preferred corridor the better. In reaching a decision on the preferred route, it will need to weigh in the balance the views of the local authorities and other consultees. I understand that Kent county council, which has appointed consultants to advise it, hopes to come to a view on its preferred route corridor in January.

Although the proposals for the Channel tunnel rail link raise matters of exceptional importance in respect of the built and the natural environment, I should remind the House that the high-speed rail link is primarily a matter for British Rail and not for the Government or the affected local authorities. British Rail will eventually have to justify the proposal to Parliament. But that does not mean that the Government in general nor the Department of Transport in particular are not taking a keen interest.

We shall ensure that environmental matters are properly taken into account in selecting the preferred route. I assure my hon. Friend that my Department has not sheltered behind the Department of the Environment in terms of parliamentary questions. Although the Department of Transport takes the lead in regard to new long-distance railway lines, issues involving the environment are concerns for my Department.

The Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations, which came into effect this July, covered proposals for long-distance railway lines authorised by way of planning Acts. At present there is no formal requirement for environmental assessment of development proposals which proceed by way of a parliamentary Bill, but the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure has given consideration to how the EC directive on environmental impact assessment can be applied to projects which would otherwise have required planning consent and environmental statements.

The Committee has recommended that each House should incorporate environmental impact assessment into the private Bill procedure by making new Standing Orders which would require promoters of any Bill which authorises the carrying out of works for which planning permission has not already been obtained to seek a determination from the appropriate Secretary of State as to whether it should be the subject of an environmental assessment with an environmental statement containing specified information. The suggested procedure would be for promoters of Bills to produce an environmental statement in advance of the Committee stage and for the Department of the Environment to comment to the Committee on the proposals contained in the Bill.

My Department is at present discussing with the Department of Transport standards for environmental assessment of new long-distance rail routes appropriate to that procedure. In advance of the adoption or implementation of those recommendations by Parliament, British Rail has voluntarily appointed consultants to undertake environmental assessment and produce a full environmental statement in respect of any future proposals.

The Government will expect British Rail or any private sector consortium putting forward proposals for a new rail link to spell out its approach to environmental protection when proposals for a new line are announced. It is expected that Parliament, in giving consideration to proposals before it, will attach considerable weight to the environmental implications alongside commercial, economic and other social factors, and will wish to be satisfied that it contains appropriate provisions to ensure that those matters are dealt with properly.

I assure my hon. Friend that environmental issues are very much to the fore in consideration of the high-speed rail link, as they were in consideration of the Channel tunnel. As a Minister for the Department of the Environment, I sit on some of the committees relating to the Channel tunnel in order to safeguard environmental interests. I represented my Department's interests at an earlier meeting which my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport held with Members of Parliament representing Kent constituencies.

British Rail's study, published in July, made it clear that a new rail link from London to the Channel tunnel would be needed some time in the future. Without it there would be a risk of excessively overloading the Kent rail network to the detriment of existing rail users. It is self-evident that no new line can be built without some detriment to the environment.

I welcome the fact that British Rail has employed independent consultants to undertake an environmental assessment of the present proposals and has committed itself to a full environmental assessment of the preferred route. Clearly, it will be in British Rail's interests in developing and progressing its proposals to ensure that it can demonstrate to Parliament that it has given adequate weight to environmental factors in selecting its preferred route corridor and futher that it has given the closest attention, in finalising the design, to minimising and mitigating the environmental impact of the rail link on the people of Kent.

I conclude by quoting from a speech that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made at the Conservative party conference this year. She used a quotation which may be a candidate for the quotation of the year when she said:

> "No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy—with a full repairing lease."

She assured the party, and I assure the House today,

> "This Government intends to meet the terms of that lease in full".

The Constitution

1.59 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I believe that we need a constitutional convention to equip ourselves to create a new democratic system that will take us into the next century and prepare us for the challenges that lie ahead. The most obvious aspect of our democracy is a ballot held once every five years. For many people, it is their only participation in the democratic process. Even that ballot takes place after scant preparation in a four or five-week campaign. Thereafter, it is business as usual. After the fairly sharp impact of the democratic process, Governments of all colours, once elected, become anti-democratic because they must get their political programmes through. They force through what they want and everything that stands in their way, regardless of political colour, is regarded as an obstruction.

Without delving too deeply into current party politics, it is true to say that the Prime Minister has done us a great service, not because she originated the problem but because she exemplifies it. Her Government have thrown into sharp relief the complete dominance of the Executive over the legislature. The great service that that has rendered to our democracy is that more and more people are becoming aware of the reality of our political position and recognise the weakness of our other political institutions faced with an unrestrained Executive.

In that new climate, broader constitutional matters are being debated far more than they were two of three years ago. Unfortunately, the debate rarely takes place in the House, and there is hardly a packed House for this debate. That shows that there has been no serious debate on the constitution, our democracy or the role of Parliament. Of course, the Government do not believe that Parliament should talk in depth about such matters—Parliament is here to pass the Government's programme—but I believe that we should have a wider debate and that Parliament has failed in its duty by not being the forum for that debate.

Unfortunately, Parliament is a political expedient that meets the needs of the Government of the day. A clear example of that—there have been many this week—was the Official Secrets Bill, on which the Minister spoke yesterday. That is an example of how the Government will try to impose their will on Parliament. Another classic example was on Tuesday. Referring to the proposed Scottish Select Committee, the Leader of the House said:

> "The Standing Orders of the House are the basis on which the House proceeds, unless the House resolves to do something different."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1988; Vol. 144, c. 340.]

It is not the House that resolves to do something different, but invariably the Government of the day who want something different, either to meet their own needs or to placate opposition within their ranks or on the other side of the House. Sadly, a Leader of the House from any party could have made that statement.

We cannot rely on the Government to be the ultimate defender of our liberties. It is a matter of some debate whether we can so rely on Parliament as it is so under the sway of Government, as all Parliaments this century have been.

I have been privileged to receive a personal education over the past 18 months—as a naive newcomer, I have found the extent of control exercised by the Executive over the House a revelation—but unfortunately most outside the House have not. The concepts about which we speak are often arid, academic and theoretical, and it is difficult to convey to people the reality of political power in the United Kingdom. We need to think more deeply about our democratic politics, but such thought is not given, whatever party is in control, and we become lazy about thinking of democracy. I freely admit that, had recent Labour Governments boldly laid down some of the building blocks of democracy, many of the worst excesses of the Government would have been impossible. The Labour party is at least as conservative as the Conservative party in this regard.

There must be democratic forms in our society that are wholly independent of Government if we are to be genuinely democratic. The first step is knowledge, not merely for a few insiders but for everyone, so that they are aware of their individual rights and the role and powers of our political institutions. The right to know is crucial, and each child should be able to leave school with a knowledge of the political institutions that will govern his or her life rather than vague feelings of deference, trust or a view that politics is irrelevant or unimportant.

If democratic values and practices are genuinely to be built into our society and values and practices, the key educative tool is a democratic constitution—a physical document, a written constitution that would be the property of every member of society. People would feel more competent to judge issues for themselves rather than regard talk of rights and liberties as irrevelant to their lives and those of their families. The creation of such a democracy would be governed by and cross-referenced against people's understanding rather than political expedient, which all too often dominates in the House. That would be the only safeguard against politicians.

Hon. Members who were defeated on the abortion issue have discovered what nonsense the use and abuse of the private Member's Bill procedure can be. Those who are unable or unwilling to organise the victory of ideas or ideals look for short cuts and salvations, the latest of which is proportional representation. Those new converts to a "democratic constitution" are to be welcomed warily. When serious change is adopted as a fad, it will just as easily be dropped and a new solution adopted. It could leave the wider cause of serious, democratic constitutional reform discredited and the political system destabilised. If we do not have the inoculation of a deeply rooted, aware democracy, the virus of Fascism could flourish in such a destabilised political system.

One day there should be a written constitution but, ever eager to compromise, I should be more than happy to accept immediately merely a Bill of Rights, endorsed by referendums and entrenched beyond the reach of fickle and simple majority in the House of Commons. As one small contribution, I have today given notice that on the first day we return in January, I shall present to the House a Bill of Rights based on the European convention first presented by Sir Edward Gardner in 1978.

A written Bill of individual and collective rights removes the arguments flowing from the will or whim of the Government or their servants. Some may argue persuasively that such a Bill merely transfers the arbitrary interpretation of civil rights from the desks of colourless bureaucrats or colourful politicians to an expensive and often class-riddled judicial system. Having tasted the legal system and the partiality of the judiciary through trade

union legislation, I can understand why that argument has neutralised many otherwise progressive people into defeatism. This can be overcome only by a deep-seated reformation of the judiciary, a nettle which even proponents of a Bill of Rights have not grasped but which must be grasped, or the constitutional conservatives in the Opposition parties will immobilise us again.

The constitutional convention would need to complete the picture by examining the Commons and the second Chamber. After the abolition of the House of Lords, an elected second Chamber—let us call it the House of Representatives—could exercise independent and legitimate scrutiny and oversight of the Government in the Commons. Once again, the powers of such a second Chamber would need to be entrenched and to be separate from those of the Commons and other institutions. The Commons would then be seen for what it is—the place where Governments propose and carry their business, with a Government-in-waiting on the Opposition Benches. *[Interruption.]* Does my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) wish to intervene? He is shaking, or nodding, his head in agreement—I am not sure which.

Without the Commons losing any of its alleged powers, the serious job of accountability would gravitate towards the elected second Chamber. This is a recipe for conflict, the constitutional conflict of debate, of education and of growing public awareness of the nature of the decisions which face us. It is a recipe for a democracy, one fit to take this nation into the next century.

As we approach Christmas, I am tempted to put the shopping list, which I have hurriedly detailed, up the chimney. Rather than Santa Claus, I shall call upon that equally improbable figure, but one in whom all Members of Parliament believe, Mr. Speaker himself, to convene a constitutional convention to appraise these issues beyond the heat of electoral battle.

2.14 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) was conversational in style and thoughtful in tone, which I appreciate. Also, he was political only from time to time. I propose to answer the debate in the same fashion.

The hon. Gentleman has not been in the House very long, but I was elected only a couple of elections before him. I have never talked to the House about constitutional reform, and this is the first chance that I have had to do so.

I admire the hon. Gentleman for his daring in that, after his 18 months' apprenticeship, he is giving the House his views in constitutional reform. Not satisfied with the debate, he now tells us that he will introduce a Bill of Rights in January. That is a formidable pace of constitutional change and we look forward to reading the Bill, which I understand is based on the Bill of Sir Edward Gardner.

Mr. Allen: Does the Minister agree that perhaps the longer one is in the House, the less likely one is to assess it as an outsider? Does he agree that we need to assess it, given the changing needs of our democracy?

Mr. Patten: I hope that my political arteries have not hardened too much after 10 years in this place. As my contribution to open government I can give a report of my recent medical check-up. I have the blood pressure of a boy of 18 and the electrocardiogram showed an almost horizontal line. The kind doctor said that it demonstrated what he had always known about Ministers—that they have no heart. My blood pressure is no worse or better than it was a few years ago, and I am as keenly interested in constitutional matters as ever.

Most hon. Members—certainly my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport—are keenly interested in reform. That is why I was surprised that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North said that Parliament was a place for the political expedient. That is wrong. Together with Mr. Enoch Powell and a number of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, I believe that the Chamber is the crucible of the nation where we hammer out our disputes and, happily, sometimes forge agreement.

The hon. Gentleman has been remarkably unobservant during the past couple of weeks. He has been present during debates on two substantial constitutional measures. He has barracked me through two successive wind-up speeches. I know that he has been there, because I have heard him muttering across the Chamber. The first measure, the Security Service Bill, was debated as recently as last Thursday. The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that significant constitutional measure. Last night, we discussed the Official Secrets Bill, and I spoke at the end of the debate.

Mr. Allen: It was an excellent speech.

Mr. Patten: I am grateful for the kind bipartisan compliment.

Mr. Allen: It is important to put on record the excellence of the Minister's speech yesterday. Despite excellent speeches by Ministers and hon. Members on both sides of the House, will the Minister tell us how many such debates have resulted in any serious change to the Government's proposals? Has not the House, even during my brief 18 months here, rubber-stamped almost every item of legislation put to it?

Mr. Patten: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman listened carefully to the debate on the official secrets White Paper on 22 July. Last night, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary demonstrated clearly how much the Government listened to that debate and how, in four significant areas, the proposals in the White Paper published last July were changed when the Bill was drafted.

Constitutional reform of various sorts has been debated in the Chamber, even though it may not have appeared on the Order Paper under the headline "Constitutional Change" or "Constitutional Reform". The hon. Member for Nottingham, North has given us his reasons why he seeks reform. There are others who seek reform. For example, the noble Lord Blake in the other place has long advanced constitutional reform from the Tory Benches. I have to say to the House, which is filling up, that constitutional reform is usually suggested by those who see it as the only route to power. I do not believe that many of those who promote constitutional reform do so for any other reason. It is normally argued by those who see the chances of sitting on the Government Benches receding into the far distance. It is normally put forward by those who see that they are losers.

[Mr. Patten]

We have put in front of us the nostrums of an organisation that is called Charter 88, which attempts to bring forward a measure of constitutional reform. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is a supporter of it; I have seen a list of apparently important signatories to the organisation. I hope that my name will never appear in one of the self-seeking lists of supporters of this or that which appear in our great national newspapers. It is my intention never to add my name to such lists. Generally speaking, those who support such organisations never bring about the changes they seek by securing expensive pages of advertising in national newspapers.

Charter 88 is a loser's charter. Those who support it realise that, with present progress, they will never achieve power. That is because they have no big idea. They have no major political concepts to put before the country such as those—here I move slightly into party politics—introduced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when she was Leader of the Opposition in 1975 and thereafter. I think that everyone, including the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who is not in his place this afternoon, has recognised that those concepts have brought about major and significant changes to the political landscape of the United Kingdom. That is real political change.

Political change is advocated by those who do not like the way that the Conservative Government are running the country, but they will have to come forward with big ideas and market them, and they will have to be ideas for which the British people will vote. Political change will not come about as a result of phoney and self-seeking charters such as Charter 88. Nor will such changes come about through electoral reform—of which more in a moment, after the hon. Member for Nottingham, North has intervened.

Mr. Allen: I am delighted that the Minister is taking up my argument about political expediency. I talked about a substitute set of proposals being put forward, with those responsible for it not being prepared to go out to the public to fight and win over their ideas. I believe that the Prime Minister won some credit because she put forward a big idea, as the Minister has described it. I should add that I do not agree with that big idea. Long-term, deep-rooted constitutional change that is based upon democracy is a bigger idea than any relatively big idea which emanates from either political party. I hope that that concept will win support throughout the House.

Mr. Patten: I believe in democracy, which is why I have given way so often to the hon. Gentleman. In the interest of trying to answer all the issues that he has raised before my time is up, I shall not be able to give way to him again.

We on the Government Benches are entirely against electoral reform. We believe that it is a recipe for weak and divided government. There is enough evidence of that around the globe to persuade us that in no circumstance will a Conservative Government be promoting electoral reform via proportional representation. That is something on which the hon. Gentleman and I can agree. I wish to make it clear to the House that what I have stated remains our intention.

I regret the hon. Member's attack on the judiciary. I winced when I heard it. The appointment of judges is a matter for my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor in another place. The Government are fully satisfied with the independent and disinterested performance of the judiciary, which we value. I must urge on the hon. Gentleman the simple fact that judges are selected solely on the basis of personal merit and fitness for the job. There is no convincing evidence that the Bench is biased.

If the hon. Gentleman stays longer in public life, he may come to feel that he did not quite get it right when he talked this afternoon about the judiciary. In fact, he got it very wrong. I would use a stronger term but I feel that it would be inappropriate to do so, given the tone that the hon. Gentleman has set in the debate.

Much of the debate on the constitution seems to proceed on a false premise. It is thought that our unwritten constitution does not guarantee specific rights. It leaves constitutional arrangements to the whim of the party in power. That point was made by the hon. Member. On the other hand, he and others might argue that, with a written constitution, the rights of citizens are fully protected because they have an easily accessible written constitution or Bill of Rights and can invoke them against the Government of the day. That is a mistake.

I may be caricaturing the argument for the sake of illustration, but the truth is that the mere existence of a constitution—written or unwritten—guarantees nothing. Everything depends on how it is interpreted and applied in daily life. Some of the most oppressive countries on earth have written constitutions or Bills of Rights. They guarantee nothing, just as proportional representation would guarantee governmental chaos in many parts of the globe.

Equally, we have recently seen some extraordinary examples of improvements in civil rights across the globe, which have come, not through the application of constitutional nostrums such as proportional representation, written constitutions and Bills of Rights, but from the will and ability of individuals to implement existing constitutional guarantees or to use the existing constitutional system to greater democratic ends. We see that movement sweeping across eastern Europe at the moment.

I would not seek to have our unwritten constitution altered in any way. I would rather see it evolve. This week's Official Secrets Bill and last week's Security Service Bill have shown the evolution of constitutional safeguards. The justification for our unwritten constitution is simply that it works and is responsible for the degree of personal liberty and general well-being for which this country has long been renowned. We have constitutional safeguards which are second to none.

Transport (Sheffield)

2.28 pm

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): On the front page of the *Sheffield Star* on 14 April, bold headlines screamed:

"7 pages of jobs in the Star tonight"

and

"Super Sheffield, Boom City of the 90s.

Developments worth £1·3 billion proposed, 77 major projects—30,000 Jobs and 10,000 Jobs in Construction."

It also said:

"The boom in investment over the last three years should result in a major facelift for the City."

Hotels, expansion schemes and industry are all concerned. The city has received assistance from the Government and has been extremely grateful for the funding that the Government have supplied for the urban development corporation, the canal basin, road improvements at Meadowhall and other schemes.

In a business survey for the third quarter from Sheffield chamber of commerce—which arrived only today— it pointed out that the domestic market

"continues to expand, with almost three quarters of the replies indicating increased orders and deliveries. On the export side, the decline in the previous quarter appears to have been arrested and more companies report increases in overseas business. The high value of sterling continues to present some problems to exporters, although not as much as in the past.

Recruitment of skilled personnel still remains a problem, with almost half the local replies confirming that difficulty had been encountered. The problem is even greater in other regions and effectively highlights the skills gap.

The picture which emerges is one of continuing growth and expansion—there are very few negative indications in investment plans or in the area of recruitment. This, linked to the high level of confidence in the growth of turnover and profit all points to an increasingly prosperous future."

The name Sheffield conjures up, especially to the south, a picture of dark satanic factories, but those days have long since gone. It used to be thought that it was a grimy, grubby dirty place to live in, but those days have long gone. We have a science park and a leisure and retail complex, which could be one of the largest in the country, and factories and new industries are springing up all over. It could be called "good news city", because the development figures have been looked at again and it was discovered that £1·3 billion has increased to £1·6 billion. The world student games in 1991 will be a major fillip, although, sadly, they will cost ratepayers in the city £9 million a year for the next 20 years unless a financial package can be put together.

If we are to move into the 20th century, however, we still need road, rail and air access. Such access is vital if we are to ensure the regeneration and continued expansion of Sheffield. My hon. Friend the Minister recently met a deputation from Sheffield to discuss the road links to Manchester. For environmental reasons, it was decided that no motorway should go through the Peak park, and I fully endorse that decision. That Minister said that the M1-M62 link was under active consideration but that some black spots—at Snake pass and at Woodhead—remained to be dealt with. Lighting is also needed on the M1.

On 12 December, British Rail announced that faster services to Sheffield would be introduced in May, cutting 20 minutes off the journey times. It said that £1 million was to be spent on Sheffield Midland station, which will be in operation by 1991 in time for the world student games. It announced a new early service to serve London airports, an hourly service morning and evening and, to meet my needs, a train leaving London at 11 pm

In a letter carrying yesterday's date, British Rail said that, under the Bill deposited in Parliament in November, a new terminal for international trains is to be built at King's Cross. A low-level station served by international trains will be linked by escalators to St. Pancras, with frequent services to Sheffield. The Doncaster line is soon to be electrified and will become even faster. Sheffield also needs a fast link to the east coast line with better and more reliable rolling stock before the year 2025 as well as a major freight depot.

I realise that some of these matters do not come under the Government's auspices, but the debate gives me the opportunity to ventilate the feeling of those in Sheffield that, with better road, rail and air facilities, the regeneration of the city could continue at a cracking pace.

We expect a major freight depot at Tinsley in Sheffield adjacent to the M1—to become the focus for direct services to the continent via the Channel tunnel. If the midland main line is not to be electrified—it seems to me that that outcome is on the cards—can we have the south trans-Pennine route to Manchester, plus a link from Sheffield to Doncaster? Trains could be assembled at Tinsley and go to the continent from there. A dream realised would be a new inland clearance depot in Sheffield, which would help the city with its continued regeneration.

I do not propose to discuss supertram today, although it comes under the auspices of the Department of Transport. As I understand it, South Yorkshire passenger transport executive has not yet prepared its bid.

Air links, too, are vital to Sheffield. I do not envisage a municipally run airport but rather an airport set up by private enterprise to enable short take-off and landing aircraft to be used. That would assist in Sheffield's economic regeneration. I have had discussions with the Ministry of Defence as to whether it would be possible to use Finningley airport for three weeks during the world student games. The suggestion was not unfavourably received, but I was told to come back nearer the time.

There is much discussion in Sheffield at the moment because a site has been found for a short take-off and landing airport but the proposal is not attracting public support in the area that has been chosen. There are other sites, however. There is a site near the M1 spur which we know as Catcliffe, which has been mined by the National Coal Board and would be an ideal spot for the airport.

No one person or organisation can claim credit for the Sheffield phoenix phenomenon. The city is rising from its ashes. For many reasons—some obvious, some hidden —the Government, local councils, industry and commerce and the citizens of Sheffield are working as a team to put Sheffield back on its feet. It is the fourth largest city in England. In a survey of Britain's 38 top cities conducted by Glasgow university to find out where the average man in the street would choose to live, Sheffield came 10th—with Bradford sixth, Hull 17th and Leeds 27th.

I was surprised to discover that the seven major influences on people when they chose where to live and why were isolated. Those influences were: the rate of crime; health provision; levels of pollution; cost of living; shopping facilities; race relations; and factors such as

[Mr. Irvine Patnick]

education, access to areas of scenic beauty, employment prospects and climate. All those factors were taken into account, before the positions in the table were calculated.

Only yesterday, major EC cash boosts came into Sheffield—£308 million-worth of investment aimed at repairing some of the economic disasters of the past decade. The fact is that, with better road, rail and air facilities, we could reach the top spot. I appreciate that the Minister will tell me—as do all Ministers—that we do not control British Rail. However, he controls the roads. He does not control air traffic, but he can assist in ensuring that some of the available funding is directed towards Sheffield.

We need a little more help from our friends to speed up the economic regeneration of Sheffield. I am grateful to my Sheffield colleagues for attending today in vast numbers. In fact, I must look hard to even imagine the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) sitting in his place. Nevertheless, I have heard him talk about this.

I am aware that there are negotiations and discussions with British Rail, but we need some assistance in explaining to British Rail that Sheffield's economic regeneration—especially the world student games in 1991—can be enhanced with good, reliable rolling stock. Sheffield's regeneration could be helped, too, by the construction of a short take-off and landing airport nearby. We have two major airports nearby; one is in Manchester, but at times, when there is ice and snow on the road, Sheffield can be cut off. The other is the East Midlands airport, which is about one hour's drive away.

When I leave the House today and journey back to Sheffield, I shall travel the same way as most business men—I shall go to Doncaster. I am not proud of that, but the service is reliable and fast, and it is a clean train. I would love to be able to say that I was travelling to Sheffield by the midland main line.

I shall be grateful to hear of anything that the Minister can do to assist the regeneration of Sheffield. I believe that the finest Christmas present anyone could have in this great season of goodwill is to say, "I have heard from British Rail that it is doing X, the Ministry of Defence is doing Y, and, above all, we have agreed with Peak park planning that some improvements can be made to the A57 and Woodhead." Speaking apolitically, many citizens and the Sheffield council would be grateful for assistance to enable them to continue with their plans.

2.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) on initiating this debate. Sadly, he was unfortunate in representing his constituents' views earlier this week when there might have been an opportunity at about 5.30 in the morning, but in the event he would have come on after the House had adjourned—rather early—at about 9 o'clock the next day. He should be congratulated on coming back for the second bite.

As my hon. Friend has said, he is the last Sheffield Member of Parliament in the House this year. He deserves the congratulations of his local people and press. I am grateful, too, to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) for attending. It is nice to see that the SDLP is represented in one of the last debates of the year.

I want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). One of his main interests is that of the constitution, which is why he sat in on the previous debate, but, of course, we know that he has a keen interest in railways, because the Stockton to Darlington railway was the first in the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hallam has rightly talked Sheffield up, and he has done so accurately. Those who have known Sheffield over the years—I cannot claim to know it anything like as well as he does, but I have visited it over the years—will recognise its dramatic transformation over the past six years or so.

Sheffield has a great and prosperous future, which it has earned for itself. The restructuring of its basic industries of steel and speciality steel products has been difficult. Competition from low-cost producers around the world has made life difficult for Sheffield. Some of the subsidies to other manufacturers, whether by exploitative pay levels or some of the old steel subsidies, made it necessary for many of Sheffield's companies and industries to take a cold bath. But Sheffield has done it without complaining.

During the years, I have kept in contact with Conservative trade unionists, visiting them not for high publicity but to learn how many of their businesses are developing the joint team effort to which my hon. Friend referred. Clearly, most of the improvement has come about because of efforts within Sheffield. Sheffield is right to have picked my hon. Friend to represent it. One does not have to be a lawyer to represent a great industrial city. Sheffield has grown its own representative.

My hon. Friend referred to the railways. When I read a British Rail press notice a week ago, I thought that it had been written by my hon. Friend. I learned that it is possible to spend an evening in London—for example, in the House of Commons—and catch the 11 pm train home, exchanging the discomfort of living in London for the comfort of Sheffield.

My hon. Friend referred to the contribution made by the fast trains knocking 20 minutes off the journey, despite the fact that the line to Sheffield is not exactly the straightest in Britain. That is an achievement. When people argue that electrification is the only answer, they should ask what return comes from the money. British Rail is aiming for improvements next year in the rescheduling of trains and the year after in some of the new stock, but what the business men really needs is a reliable hourly service. Then Sheffield and the rest of the country will be better served.

If it is possible to get from Sheffield to London or Newcastle in two hours, those of us who benefit from Sheffield's business would be able to see its business men, salesmen and technical people more often, and that would be welcome. A regular hourly service is the answer to those who, having just missed one train, ask when the next will be. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out.

When I was in Japan in the summer looking at motorcycle safety, I had the opportunity to ride in the cab of a Shin-kan-sen. With completely new track and no freight or commuter trains, those bullet trains manage to go only 10 miles an hour faster than British Rail's high-speed trains on track that is 100 years old. Our rail engineers, whether they come from Darlington or Sheffield, have done well.

My hon. Friend also talked about air transport. It would be pleasant to have an airport on the edge of the city —so long as one did not live there. We have seen the first new private sector airport—the Stolport—in London docklands. That is the way forward for those who want to provide a similar airport at their own risk. I know that my hon. Friend is not one of those who would say that every city, even the fourth greatest city in Britain, even the 17th or 18th most pleasant city in which to live in Britain, should necessarily have its airport on the rates.

Since the war, there have been too many examples in Britain of municipal enterprise turning an airport into a subsidy sink. I am not saying that we should not subsidise anything, but we should be careful about arguing that ratepayers should pay for airports.

Mr. Patnick: Buses.

Mr. Bottomley: Bus deregulation outside London has demonstrated the worth of a market approach. Instead of an exponential growth from no subsidy to one of £500 million over 10 years, while the number of bus miles driven per member of staff declined long with the number of passengers, deregulation has made it possible to reduce the subsidy, and increase the number of passengers and for buses to go to estates where they have never been before.

In Sheffield and elsewhere, the new private sector operators are providing minibus services in estates that were inaccessible to double deckers. People may say, "Deregulation has led to buses going into those estates," and go on to say that that is a bad thing. Only the Labour party can find people who will say that. If Labour had thought of ways of getting minibuses into estates that had not previously been served, they would have praised themselves for thinking of it first. Tough luck. We thought of a way of making it possible for local or outside entrepreneurs to provide a service of commercial benefit.

Some aspects of transport must be provided on a group basis, and the building of roads is one. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it plain that he is interested in extending the boundaries of private finance. No one is precisely sure how that will happen, but that it should be considered possible is a move forward. We have seen the involvement of private design, private finance and private operation coming to the Dartford-Thurrock bridge, allowing extra money to be spent on other road projects, be they minor improvements to the A57 or extensions to the major road network outside the national park. All that is of benefit.

We have seen also the 150 schemes where private developers have invested £50 million in better roads or better road access that otherwise would not have been possible. Sometimes, that has been done in agreement with the highways authority or in the developers' self-interest. We should look for ways of developing self-interest without selfishness. Those who argue that self-interest has no part to play are wrong. Few see the merit of public provision as a substitute for private provision when the result can be the same. In Sheffield, when people were looking for jobs, they could have been provided by the municipal Socialists or by companies, co-partnerships, individual entrepreneurs, joint stock companies, or whatever. It is a matter of finding or creating opportunities and then identifying profitable, creative ways of meeting people's needs.

There is then the issue of conventional public funding of roads. I delight in the announcement that the national roads programme will increase by 20 per cent. in the coming year, and that over three years it will increase by 40 per cent. That is not wild profligacy but meeting the country's needs. It will not meet them totally, because there are other areas, whether in Coventry, Sheffield, or elsewhere, where people will go on asking for better roads to be built. Sometimes they will want longer, wider, stronger or deeper roads. Although that may sound trite, there is truth in it. Extensions to the Sheffield road network will allow Sheffield's goods to reach the ports and the Pennines, to travel north or south, and to reach export markets.

My hon. Friend mentioned a number of achievements, some of them accompanied in partnership. He rightly praised the local authority and private sector for working together. None of us should overlook the fact that the roads partnership between local and national Government is one of the best. Occasionally it is controversial, but not normally in respect of projects outside London. The Meadowhall is one development where the Government said that they would help an inner-city project, and I am delighted that my hon. Friend found time to mention it. He spoke also of the canal basin developments, and of the urban development corporation. They have all received attention in the House.

My hon. Friend said he wished to see further improvements, and referred to the delegation that he kindly brought to see me about the A57. I am glad it is generally recognised that it will not be appropriate to find a short cut from Manchester to Sheffield by driving a motorway across the national park. That would be going too far. I make it plain that we take seriously our assurances that we shall not unnecessarily build roads through the national parks. However, I hope that those listening away from Sheffield will have the courage to admit that opposition to the Okehampton bypass was wrong. Anyone who has seen that bypass, where we went into the national park by about 50 yards alongside a railway line, so that the road is hidden both from the park itself and from the town, and that those who just provided their ideas by looking at a map and wanted a 10-foot high viaduct had got it wrong.

We hope to protect the Peak district national park in a similar way. If it is possible for the board, perhaps in collaboration with my hon. Friend and others, to carry out minor improvements, that will make a difference. If most of the traffic is asked to go along the A268 and the A616, I think that we can agree on those minor improvements without making the A57 so attractive that pressures start developing for major improvements.

My hon. Friend has demonstrated that it is possible to come to the House to represent a city. He was of course elected by only part of the city, but seems to be representing all of it, as he is the only Sheffield Member who has taken the time to come here today. He has done so in a positive way, without knocking the city council —although he may, as I do, have his own views about some of its actions. He has recognised that the council is working more with the public sector, and has talked of the need—and the method—to create continuous growth and expansion.

I believe that, as traffic builds up on British Rail services and more people start using the direct service rather than the diversion via Doncaster, British Rail, as a commercial

[Mr. Bottomley]

organisation meeting the Secretary of State's objectives and serving the public, will find ways of improving its service still further. I can make no predictions about the air services; that must be left to the commercial judgment of those who will decide whether, in addition to the two airports that people now use, a smaller airport can be built nearer Sheffield.

It is worth emphasising that better roads make economic growth possible and that economic growth generates more traffic. There is a "virtuous circle". When the Channel tunnel is completed, the railways will have a competitive advantage that they do not have now. Nevertheless, even on the most optimistic forecasts of the movement of traffic from roads to railways, economic growth will still mean more freight on the roads. That is why we want to continue to run the economy in a way that will bring about significant and welcome increases in the roads programme. It will then be possible for hon. Members on both sides of the House to come to the Department of Transport and ask for their share of this better infrastructure—what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I call better roads, better bridges and occasionally better tunnels. Every two years we intend to take such action.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced that he wants a review of the motorway and trunk road programme. We look forward to meeting his wishes and putting our conclusions before the House is the spring. I hope not only that we shall see a better, booming Sheffield, but that the other cities below it in the popularity stakes will gain as well; and that those temporarily above it will realise that they must compete very hard to stay ahead.

Israel

1.52 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South): It is somewhat appropriate that the last debate of 1988—the last debate before the Christmas holiday—should be about Israel. It is, indeed, almost symbolic. A visitor to Bethlehem in 1988 would not be turned away from the inn to find shelter in a manger, because the inns and hotels, normally fully booked over a year in advance, are 60 per cent. empty this year. That reflects the 15 per cent. drop in tourism in Israel and the occupied territories over the last year.

The Palestinian uprising against 21 years of Israeli rule in the occupied West Bank and Gaza strip has entered its second year. The brutal repression of the intafada is measured not just in economic terms, in the loss of tourism or the Bank of Israel's estimate of $700 million lost in GDP, but in truly horrific statistics of casualties. Estimates compiled up to the anniversary of the uprising two weeks ago for the number of Palestinians killed range from the Defence Ministry's 302 to the 405 assessed by the International Commission of Jurists' local organisation Al-Haq. Eleven Israelis have died.

The number of Palestinians wounded is 3,640 according to the Israeli Government; over 20,000 according to Al-Haq and the United Nations. The Defence Ministry figures also list 402 Israeli civilians and 730 soldiers as casualties. Converted into a British context, the equivalent figures would be 12,000 to 16,000 killed and over 750,000 wounded. That is a glimpse of the scale of the horror. During the year, 20,000 Palestinians have been arrested, thousands of whom have been detained in notorious camps such as Answa 3. The Defence Ministry confirms that 5,500 Palestinians are now in gaol. Houses have been demolished by bulldozers. People have been expelled from their homeland and semi-permanent curfews and sieges have been imposed. The Jelazoun refugee camp was under non-stop curfew for 42 days.

I visited Israel and the West Bank in October with my comrade the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and a Danish dock workers' leader, Carsten Andersen. It was my first parliamentary delegation visit in over five years as a Member of Parliament, and it lasted six days. A brief debate such as this is too short in which to convey the vivid impressions of that visit, although going from Tel Aviv, a largely modern, western city, to the outskirts of Jericho, or the largest Arab village in Israel, Um el Fahm, was literally like walking back to the biblical age.

We visited Jericho under the auspices of the United Palestinian Medical Relief Committee. Its director, Dr. Jihad Mashal, was our guide. We visited medical centres set up by a group of volunteer doctors and workers. Their aim is to educate the people in basic health care and to provide medical treatment in an expanding programme. We saw slides of the results of brutality against the population by the occupying forces. The condition of some of the victims was horrendous and defies description.

We saw the stark contrast of what exemplifies the differences in society for the Palestinians. Water, flowing from natural springs in the mountains, is enclosed in pipes for consumption by Israelis in the settlements. The Palestinians cannot take water from such piping. Their water supply flows down man-made gulleys—ditches, in fact—that are open to the atmosphere, and it is used for

washing, cooking and drinking. It is also used by the local clinic. No attempt is made by the authorities to provide sterile, clean water for Palestinian families. Water supplies to homes from these gulleys takes the primitive form of dropping a length of tubing into the trough and letting gravity do the job of relaying it to the houses—or not.

We saw squalor, deprivation and repression on the one side and affluence and privilege on the other. The barren area and conditions in which the refugees in the camps have to live contrast sharply with the well laid out and serviced Israeli settlements and, in addition, the palatial houses owned by rich Palestinians who apparently are dual passport holders.

The contrast in the camps could not be greater. Sewage runs down gulleys in the main thoroughfare—they cannot be called streets—and many homes are built in the traditional way with mud bricks. Youths roam the streets, as there is no formal schooling since the intafada, except that provided by volunteers. Overshadowing the camp were military positions on the high road above.

The camp is continually under surveillance on normal days. On others, the troops enter the camps in large numbers and provoke the people, especially the youth, and make arrests. That is done in an attempt to take out those layers among the youth who may be leaders in the popular committees, which are made up of the ordinary people. The committees enjoy the complete confidence of the people and call the days of action and strikes. They organise the distribution of food and take care of the welfare of families whose homes have been destroyed by the troops—a common occurrence.

The delegation saw homes that had been destroyed and spoke with families who had suffered in this way at the hands of the occupying power. Although suffering terrible conditions and hardship, the mood of all sections of the population was one of supreme optimism, from young children to aged grandparents. They expressed the view that they had achieved more in the months of intafada than anything else in 40 years: that it was the people, all the people, who had taken their destinies into their own hands and who were now struggling for independence. Their confident belief was that they would win and that they could not suffer any more. Nothing that the Israeli state could do to them could deflect them from that ultimate goal.

Although the human cost of the intafada, measured in deaths and casualties, is undeniable, it is the political effects which have spread in recent weeks like expanding ripples after a stone has been tossed into water. The growing international support for the Palestinian cause is, in my view, based on the heroism of the workers and the youth in Gaza and on the West Bank.

The Labour Movement internationally has had much sympathy for the state of Israel, whose formation was given impetus by the horrific genocide of the Jewish people in Nazi gas chambers during the second world war. Until recently, abuses by the Israeli authorities of human rights has not attracted the same level of criticism as similar activities in South Africa or Chile. The developing use of Arab workers in Israel and the occupied territory, like the migrant workers from the Bantustans in South Africa, and in particular the gruesome scale of repression of the intafada—reinforced by infamous television scenes of soldiers beating Palestinians until their bones were broken—are drastically changing working people's perception of Israel.

The intafada is the backcloth, in my view the main contributory factor to the declaration by the Palestine National Council at its Algiers summit of an independent Palestinian state—a proclamation that was universally welcomed in the occupied territory—and to the speech by Yasser Arafat at the United Nations meeting in Geneva.

Workers internationally have viewed with deep unease the past methods of terror campaigns and hijacking. The recognition by the PLO's leadership that those methods have not, and would not have, forced Israel into submission can only be welcomed. The increasing diplomatic isolation of Israel is evidenced by the United Nations vote of 150 to two—with the United Kingdom disgracefully abstaining—over a visa for Yasser Arafat to address the UN Assembly in New York, by recent developments and contacts initiated by the American Government and by today's declaration of a coalition Government formed in Israel. That isolation could increase significantly if workers' organisations began to discuss sanctions to isolate Israel, as dockers in Denmark —some of the staunchest defenders of Jews during the second world war—have recently done.

Israel's boast of being the only democracy in the middle east is coming under closer scrutiny not only on the West Bank but also behind the green line. It is undeniable that there is a measure of democracy in Israel. There is a system of parliamentary democracy which, despite serious flaws, has free elections; there are diverse political parties and various other features of western democracy. But for Arab workers in Israel and on the West Bank there are no more rights than in surrounding reactionary Arab regimes.

At the beginning of this year, the partial publication of the Landau report caused a wave of controversy in Israel society. It disclosed the routine torture of Palestinian detainees and extracted confessions for more than 17 years. When such cases came to court, Shin Bet agents flatly denied such allegations. The report states:

> "We do not refer to the means of interrogation used, which in large measure are to be condoned, both on a moral and legal plane . . . but to the system of giving false testimony to the courts . . . which must be fully condemned."

In other words, denying the occurence of torture was a far greater crime than the torture itself.

I now have personal experience of one such political prisoner. I believe that the evidence that the Israeli authorities claim to have in the case of Mahmoud Masarwa consists mainly of confessions extracted by beatings by the security services at Petach Tikra police station and Ashkelon prison.

Mahmoud was arrested on 18 July, just two days before he was due to arrive here. I was going to bring him to the House to meet other Labour Members. I was keen to meet Mahmoud, an Arab citizen of Israel, born within its pre-1967 borders. He came to my attention because he advocates unity between Jewish and Arab workers as vital to obtaining a solution that could satisfy all the oppressed people in the region. Far from being a professional terrorist, as the Israeli authorities have tried to imply, Mahmoud was forced to hold down two jobs to support his wife and three children. He was a well-known activist at the Isre Biton cement works near Tel Aviv—his most recent place of employment—where he, an Arab worker, played a predominant role in a strike of mainly Jewish workers for recognition of a factory committee.

Despite repeated attempts, I received no response to my letters and phone calls to the Israeli authorities—that is,

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

until after I had returned from Israel three months later. With other concerned hon. Members and trade unionists internationally receiving largely the same blank response, the international campaign which had now been formed to secure his release decided to send a delegation to Israel. Jef Ulburghs, a Belgian Member of the European Parliament played an invaluable role in that campaign, for he moved a resolution of support for Mahmoud in the European Parliament, which was adopted on a 60 per cent. majority vote. One of the results of that resolution was a European Parliament delegation to the occupied territory in the new year.

In addition to parliamentarians and leading trade unionists in Britain, sponsors of the campaign to release Mahmoud include trade unions representing millions of workers in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Germany, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Pakistan and the United States of America. Prominent individuals who sponsored the campaign and the delegation included the president of the Lawyers Association of Athens, Anker Jorgenssen, who was the Prime Minister of Denmark for seven years, and Oscar Verner, the president of the Danish section of the Association of Former Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Survivors.

Even with such backing, when we arrived in Israel no official of any Ministry would meet us. Nor were we allowed to visit Mahmoud in prison, despite repeated approaches by ourselves and the welcome assistance of locally based British embassy officials.

Since Mahmoud's arrest, any information relating to him has been banned from press publication, although internationally anyone reading the London-based *Jewish Chronicle* will be aware of the campaign on his behalf. Although no details of his arrest can be published in Israel, a standard letter was sent out from Israeli embassies alleging that Mahmoud had been involved in "planning terrorist acts", "arson" and links with the PLO in the West Bank and Gaza strip. The press in Israel were forbidden to print that information.

The plot was assuming the proportions of a Kafka novel, interlaced with pointers from Russia in the 1930s and "Spycatcher" in the 1980s. When the delegation arrived in October, a small article appeared in one newspaper saying that a delegation of Labour Members from Britain had arrived to take up a case on which the newspaper was forbidden to comment. That immediately aroused interest, and with the assistance of helpful Israeli journalists we managed to breach the wall of silence that has surrounded Mahmoud's case.

The papers could refer to the details of the case legally by mentioning the coverage in the *Jewish Chronicle* as an authoritative source, and Mahmoud's case became front-page news, with coverage in the *Hadashot* and the *Maariv*, the second and third largest circulation Hebrew newspapers, and in the Arabic newspaper *El Fajir*. As a result of the widespread publicity that the case received, reporting restrictions were partially lifted by the court, which was hailed as a major victory by Israeli civil rights activists.

The other way in which the delegation was able to assist the campaign was by securing legal representation for Mahmoud. Attempts to mount a legal defence were systematically sabotaged by the Israeli authorities. In August, a court order prevented his lawyer, Andre Rosenthal, from representing him, on the grounds that he did not have "unquestioned" security clearance. A new lawyer was found—Avrahim Orin.

A few days before Mahmoud was due to appear in court on Tuesday 18 October, his family were told that Orin, too, would be refused security clearance. We were able to negotiate for the services of Avigdor Feldman, the lawyer who represented Mordecai Vanunu in the recent atom secrets trial. Obviously, the Israeli authorities could not turn him down on the basis of lack of security clearance, and he is now representing Mahmoud.

Thanks to donations received by the campaign before we left Britain, we were able to leave Mrs. Masarwa with a sum of money to help to provide for the family. In addition, I was able to bring Mahmoud's family to Tel Aviv for the first stage of the trial on 18 October. During a brief pause in the trial, I arranged for his children to be brought in to the court room, and for the first time in three months Mahmoud was able to hold their seven-month-old baby.

During the break, Mahmoud made this statement to the public gallery:

"I stand for a bi-national state of Jewish and Arab workers. I was arrested because I was going to say these things in England. I don't have confidence in the court because the security service is making the decisions, but I am willing to fight for my innocence and I am sure workers throughout the world will help me."

Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give that pledge today.

I have dealt at some length with the case of Mahmoud Masarwa, who is one of many victims of the Israeli Government's brutality and secrecy. He is a test case for thousands of others—a litmus paper that shows the absence of genuine democracy and freedoms in Israel.

On the basis of the worsening position for Arabs inside and outside Israel's 1967 borders, Britain's relations with that country must be re-examined. A condition for continued trade and other relations with Israel should be the release of political prisoners and the withdrawal of the Israel defence forces from the occupied territories. Given Britain's past role in the area—the emergency regulations inherited from the British mandate in 1948 are still renewed annually by the Knesset—Britain's contribution of less than £1 million in humanitarian aid for education, health and other projects on the West Bank and in the Gaza strip is woefully inadequate. I hope to do what I can to encourage British trade unions, especially those connected with the Health Service and education, to twin with organisations such as the United Palestinian Medical Relief Committee.

I end with a message to the heroic Palestinian people, who have endured much over the past few years, not least over the past 12 months. In retrospect, the Intifada, which began on 9 December 1987, will be seen as the breaking point for the national oppression of the Palestinian people. Its success will be achieved in a shorter period if it is linked to a fruitful appeal to Jewish workers in Israel for the unity of Jew and Palestinian in trying to establish a Socialist federation of Israel and Palestine committed to the guarantee of democratic and national minority rights for all. Were that to be established, it would be not only a hope for the future for the workers and people of the area but an echo of hope to the oppressed masses of the surrounding reactionary Arab regimes.

3.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. William Waldegrave): I agree with some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), though I doubt that we share the same political analysis of the position. Appeals for worker solidarity throughout the world as the solution to conflict have been shown in a number of conflicts—one thinks of the first world war—to be not necessarily fruitful. Sadly, nationalism overcomes such appeals.

Some of the hon. Gentleman's remarks struck a chord, and he clearly understood that, for all its faults, Israel still has much to be proud of and to offer. Recent events and the potential loss and damage to some of the values for which Israel has stood make its friends and supporters desperately sad.

When explaining how he fought in court for Mr. Mahmoud's rights, the hon. Gentleman used the phrase "Israeli civil rights activist". It is true that there are such people in Israel fighting hard for such causes. That phrase creates no sense of surprise in the House, but the phrase "Syrian civil rights activist" or "Libyan civil rights activist" does not trip off the tongue quite so easily. We must not forget the difference between the Israeli regime and some of those that surround it.

Israel's liberal values, including the possible election of Socialist Governments and the institutions that guarantee those liberties, seem to be under threat from the policy that it is following, which creates anxiety and genuine sadness among people in this country. We have always valued our friendship and contact with Israel. We value our cultural exchanges, our trade and the immense number of relationships that exist. Our respect for the beliefs of the founding fathers leads us to urge Israel that the course on which it is engaged is profoundly mistaken. I agree with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East about the abuses of civil rights, which sadly have become too common in response to the uprising in the occupied territories.

It is no news to the House that the Government—spectacularly in the shape of my predecessor—have from time to time put on record their profound objection to what has happened. I am irritated by the way in which the Israelis say that punishments such as deportation are based on British law. The mandate territory regulations under which such punishments were carried out were repealed long ago and are not part of British law.

We should concentrate on the next steps. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said—I was much impressed by it—the PNC in Algiers, with further clarification from Mr. Arafat and others, has made it clear that it has shifted its position and tactics. The PNC has shifted its strategy and seen that Israel can withstand to the end of time the terrorist campaigns which have been waged against it. The PNC has seen that, every time a terrorist atrocity is committed, more damage is done to international sympathy and support for the Palestinian cause than is done to Israel. It is not a matter just of public relations, as some have claimed: the PNC in Algiers and the PLO leadership have signalled a clear shift in approach.

The individual for whom the hon. Gentleman campaigned so that he will achieve his legal rights in Israel was, I gather, a supporter—as he has every right to be in a free country—of the original concept of a single state, with Jew and Palestinian living together. That is a marvellous ideal, but in practical terms seems far from ever being possible. The PNC has accepted the outcome of a dual state. It was made clear to me by Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif, whom I met, and in writings by senior Palestinian leaders, that the PNC—the body which drew up the PLO's charter on a single-state solution, which the Israelis find so threatening—has shifted its position and will support a two-stage solution. That is a second, fundamental shift. It explicitly involves the recognition of a state of Israel existing within secure borders. Mr. Arafat made that clear in Geneva.

The third point which the PLO leadership has recognised is that the international conference, which the Government and the Opposition believe is the best way of taking the matter forward, should be on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 and others which call for recognition of Israel and the idea of trading land for peace. These shifts are profound. Among all the tragedies of this Christmas, let us not forget that there are signs of hope in the world. These shifts offer an opportunity of making progress at last in dealing with this dire problem. That will happen only if Israel responds.

The hon. Gentleman's anger about what he saw is understandable, and I would not argue against it. I take issue with him, however, on whether the international community should isolate and punish Israel or should try to build bridges to Israel. If we talk about imposing trade sanctions and pressure on Israel, a nation of 2,000 years of potential isolation and with a capacity to feel itself alienated from its surroundings, the danger is that it will react as it has always done. That is not the right way to go.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhode James), who is one of those who undertakes these important activities, is present. We should all build bridges to those in Israel who want peace and know that pracitcal steps could be taken towards it.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East spoke of some of those people with whom he had worked.

I agree with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East that the external leadership of the Palestinians decided that it had to take practical steps or it would lose control. It was not the leadership that caused the Intifada but the ordinary people in the occupied territories. With an extraordinary display of solidarity, those people took the matter forward. The external leadership feared that it would be isolated and would lose control. Therefore, I agree with the hon. Gentaleman that the uprising changed world opinion and the opinion of the Palestinian external leadership.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): What is the Government's policy?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's policy is to advance towards an international conference, under the aegis of which the Israelis and the Palestinians—the Palestinians would have a right to choose their own representatives—should move towards peace. The Israeli Government cannot choose with whom to negotiate. As Abba Eban said on a famous occasion, one does not make peace with one's friends but with one's enemies. Therefore, one has to talk with one's enemies. Bassam Abu Sharif said that the PLO could make peace withing a few days if it talked to the "Peace Now" movement in Israel. It is not for the PLO to select with whom to negotiate.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

Now that the PLO has made a fundamental shift in outlook and opened a window of opportunity for progress, it is for Israel to begin to respond. We have to decide whether a real response is likely to come from ganging up on Israel or from trying to work with those in Israel who know the truth. They know that, even with all its military skills and military investment, Israel cannot live safely in world of modern weaponry. There are people in Israel who understand that, and it is to them that we look for a response.

I welcome the letter in *The Times* today from Lord Rothschild, the distinguished constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge. He said that we should test, in searching and specific negotiations, the declarations that the PLO has made. They cannot be tested unless the framework of a peace conference is established and talks get under way. Surely that is the right response. It is the Government's response, and I believe that it is the response of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Coventry South-East.

In the meantime, the British Government and other European Governments must do all we can to ensure that life in the occupied territories is made more tolerable. As the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East knows, we have been taking steps to ensure access to European markets for goods produced in the Palestinian territories. We have been trying to support some of the institutions, such as hospitals. The hon. Gentleman referred to the closure of schools and universities. Those are matters that we should attempt to alleviate.

Ultimately, Israel will have to live with the Palestinians. Every day that passes with no Israeli policy except the beating and shooting of people, builds increased bitterness for the future. It is in the interest of Israel to join us in trying to diminish the causes of the continuing conflict.

I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East has given us the opportunity once again to summarise our policy and to put on record what we believe should now be done. I think that that is a suitable ending for our proceedings before the Christmas recess. There is some hope in the present situation, but that hope can be all too easily dissipated if the only response from the Israeli Government and their supporters is to emphasise the difficulties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Before we adjourn, I wish all hon. Members, our officials and our staff a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Three o'clock till Tuesday 10 January 1989, pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 19 December.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 January 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

USSR (Military Reductions)

1. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposed military reductions.

3. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposed military reductions.

4. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence strategy of President Gorbachev's proposed reductions in Soviet forces stationed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

8. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposals to reduce the numbers of tanks, combat aircraft and artillery systems.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archibald Hamilton): The British Government and their NATO allies have welcomed the reductions in Soviet forces announced by Mr. Gorbachev on 7 December. If implemented, these will be a significant step towards the elimination of the Warsaw pact's large numerical superiorities in conventional forces in Europe. Even after such reductions, however, Warsaw pact conventional forces would outnumber NATO in Europe by approximately 2·5:1 in tanks and artillery. It will still be necessary, therefore, for NATO to pursue its existing policy of maintaining adequate forces to deter aggression while seeking improved international relations through arms control and other measures.

Mr. Bennett: Is that not a complacent and disappointing answer to the question? Does the Minister accept that the proposals are very significant, that they will save the Soviet Union a considerable amount of money, that they will enable it to get rid of obsolete equipment and that they will also be a significant step towards reducing armaments? Can the Government match that with some similar gesture? Is it not time that we got rid of Trident, which is extremely expensive and clearly will not work, as we do not have an independent communications system? Would that not be a significant gesture in the same direction?

Mr. Hamilton: The difficulty that we face is the appalling imbalances between the Warsaw pact countries and our own, so there is nothing to be said for balancing this. We want to see continued asymmetrical cuts bearing heavily on the Warsaw pact side. However, we very much welcome this as a good first step.

Mr. Morgan: Is the Minister telling us that, until the reduction in the Soviet Union and Warsaw pact forces passes the level of the NATO forces on the way down, NATO, and the British Government in particular, will not change their defence policy or try to participate in the process of build-down that the Soviet Union now appears to want to initiate? Does he agree that, by the time President Gorbachev arrives on the re-arranged visit to this country, the Government will have prepared no new United Kingdom defence policy in answer to what appears to be a completely altered threat from an offensive strategy by the Soviet Union to a defensive strategy? Surely the Government must have some response to that.

Mr. Hamilton: It is much too early to say that the whole Soviet threat has altered. We are seeing a reduction, or proposed reduction, in the numbers of troops, but the military capability of the Warsaw pact, in terms of its equipment, is improving.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister accept that the Soviet Union's package of proposals means that NATO should consider revising its strategy? Should not decisions such as those to base more nuclear-capable United States aircraft in this country be delayed until the full impact of the proposals has been taken into account?

Mr. Hamilton: No. What we next want to see is progress being made on the conventional stability talks, which will reduce numbers on both sides. There are proposals to reach lower levels, and we are proposing that the number of tanks held by both sides should be 40,000.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, even after the proposed reductions, the Soviet Union's massive superiority in numbers should give us cause for concern? Does he also agree that the demonstration given by the Mig at Farnborough last year shows clearly how the Soviet Union has caught up with the West in technology and ability and that this should also give us cause for concern, because, at one time, we thought that we had superiority in quality?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. Both Flanker and Fulcrum are sophisticated aircraft that have given the Soviet Union a great technological leap forward; we certainly cannot be complacent about the technical capability of the Soviet forces.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is strong support for the views of the Government and their attitude and reactions to the Soviet initiative, but that there is still a great deal of work to be done on verification, and that the best way of dealing with these matters is through the conventional stability talks rather than through unilateral NATO reductions?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, that absolutely must be true. It is important that the Soviet Union takes up a defensive posture over this rather than an aggressive one.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that, while the reductions are welcome, they do not in any way affect the modernisation programme of sea and air-launched cruise missiles that the Soviet Union is carrying out, and that for many years the Soviet Union had a policy of keeping its older tanks as new ones come in and that the equivalent British tanks which correspond to those being scrapped on the other side left service many years ago?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, that is absolutely right. Modern Soviet tanks virtually outnumber all tanks held by NATO forces.

Ms. Ruddock: Is it not a fact that Mr. Gorbachev has made it clear that there is real expectation in the Soviet Union that the unilateral cuts will take account of that notion and that there will be new tanks among those that are to be reduced?

Mr. Hamilton: I should be surprised if we saw substantial cuts in the number of new tanks held by the Soviet Union. I remind the hon. Lady that it was Mr. Krushchev who said that he would reduce troops by 1·25 million, and that those reductions never took place.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that many eastern European countries go some way towards welcoming Mr. Gorbachev's announcement of these withdrawals, but would welcome even further withdrawals from their territory? Can he keep pressure on the Soviet Union to continue talks about the future of the balance between the Warsaw pact and NATO at the conventional stability talks in Vienna?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, we shall maintain all pressure. Several eastern European countries are grateful to see Soviet divisions withdraw, but there are no proposals to withdraw the large numbers of divisions from East Germany.

Mr. O'Neill: The Minister said that the number of Soviet tanks which will be withdrawn are predominantly aged. Will he concede that the bulk of the tanks which are at present located in the German Democratic Republic have of necessity to be among the most modern? Given that a large proportion of the tanks which President Gorbachev has said are being withdrawn will be withdrawn from East Germany, surely it would be inappropriate for us further to enhance the instability of the position by going ahead and modernising our tactical weapons at a time when the threat that those weapons are supposed to be meeting will be considerably reduced?

Mr. Hamilton: No. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, in practice the Soviet Union is modernising all its weapons systems, so it is important that we maintain the quality of our weapon systems even if we have fewer of them.

BAOR (Tanks and Helicopters)

2. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy as to the correct balance of tanks and helicopters for the operational effectiveness of the British Army of the Rhine.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Neubert: Recent operational analysis has confirmed that both the tank and the helicopter have an essential role on the modern and future battlefield. We shall continue to invest substantially in both, but it is not the policy of this or previous Administrations to provide details of future levels of investment.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box and am delighted to hear him for the first time in the House after his rather long period of enforced silence. May I tell him that the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State before Christmas about the Challenger 2 tank has been widely welcomed throughout Yorkshire? Can he tell the House what role the Royal Air Force plays in support helicopters for the British Army of the Rhine? In achieving the right balance of tanks and helicopters, does he accept that, so far as possible, we must ensure that whatever equipment is purchased is the best available and is manufactured in Britain? Does he further accept that there should be no reason why those two points are incompatible?

Mr. Neubert: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for the kindness of his opening remarks. It will be refreshing to give voice in this Chamber more frequently in future. He is right about our decision to commission at the demonstration phase the Challenger 2 tank which has met with a wide welcome in the House and in the world outside, but not in the Kremlin. My hon. Friend asked about command and control of support helicopters. Following a separate study of that question, changes have been implemented that we believe will constitute the best arrangements for guaranteeing support helicopters for land battle, and for providing the necessary confidence to Army commanders that support helicopter assets will be made available and deployed in accordance with their priorities.

Mr. Dalyell: While we are on the subject of helicopters, are the Government egging on, or pulling at the shirt tails, of Sir John Cuckney in his bid for GEC?

Mr. Neubert: That matter may arise later, if right hon. and hon. Members are lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Sir Jim Spicer: My hon. Friend may like notice of this question; if so, he will let me know. Do the Federal Republic of Germany's defence forces, and those of the United States, have a much higher ratio of helicopters to tanks than we do? If so, is there a lesson for us to learn from that?

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice, nor has it been the practice of previous Administrations, to indicate the precise balances of weapons and, in particular, to disclose the numbers of operational aircraft. It is clear that tanks and helicopters are both necessary. Certainly the Soviet Union thinks that tanks are needed, as do the Dutch and the Germans.

Supplies (Monopolies)

5. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to ensure that after 1992 there will not be a monopoly supply situation in any branches of the defence supply industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The Ministry is committed to procurement by competitive tender, wherever practicable. We will continue monitoring changes to the supplier base and assess their implications for defence on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Thorne: When my hon. Friend's advice is sought over any bid for defence contractors in this country, and for the Plessey company in particular, please will he bear in mind the partners who may be involved in such a bid —especially in view of the fact that they may have nothing to contribute from a defence point of view——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's own question is about what will happen after 1992.

Mr. Thorne: Following 1992, will we be careful to ensure that we do not make deals with people within the Community that will not be to the benefit of our defence interests, particularly when those concerned have little or no defence expertise of their own? That would mean sharing our secrets now, which might adversely affect our ability to obtain future contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: I know that my hon. Friend takes, understandably, a close interest in the defence activities of many of his constituents. I assure him that we shall look carefully at each bid that might arise after 1992, or before, to take account of all the relevant factors, including the ownership of any companies that may be involved in any such bid.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Can the Minister give the House an indication of his Ministry's strategy for ensuring that its procurement programme is not in any sense disrupted or adversely affected by the takeover of companies either now or after 1992?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that we attach the greatest importance to maintaining competition among our suppliers, because we believe that that is the best possible way of promoting efficiency and therefore giving us value for money. We consider any circumstances that may arise, including bids of the kind to which the hon. and learned Gentleman refers, in the light of that strategy.

Mr. Burns: Important though events after 1992 are, will my hon. Friend bear in mind events prior to 1992? Does he agree that, important though it is to have a non-monopoly, it is equally vital that Britain's largest defence contractor, GEC-Marconi, is not allowed to become partly owned by a foreign state-owned company? Does he accept that many people in my constituency and elsewhere believe that, if that situation were to arise, it would be the height of folly?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that it would not be proper or helpful for me to speculate on possible bids which have not yet been made and the nature of which we do not know.

Mr. Douglas: Given that the Minister is looking ahead to 1992, will he enlighten the House with his definition of "monopoly"? I accept the confidentiality of this, but what advice has he been given by the Civil Service about the blocking of bids which might result in large defence contractors which are now under threat being taken over or substantially controlled by foreign creditors?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that only one definition of "monopoly" stands up: when there is only one supplier. That is the one that we intend to stick to.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend agree that, both before and after 1992, there is a great deal to be said for big, Great British companies remaining British?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that we can take considerable pride in the competence of British defence contractors. I am sure that we can also agree that we can look forward to continuing to have a flourishing and successful British defence industry.

Mr. Rogers: In 1986, the Government told the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that they were against a GEC-Plessey merger on the grounds, first, that that would reduce competition in defence procurement, and secondly, that it would mean a financial loss to the MOD of between £600 million and £900 million. May we assume that the Government, who pride themselves on being consistent, still hold the views that they propounded in 1986?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I think is already known, the Office of Fair Trading has asked all interested parties, including the MOD, for advice on the bid for Plessey, and we have provided that advice in confidence in the normal way——

Mr. O'Neill: Have the circumstances changed since 1986?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I have just said, we have provided that advice in confidence in the normal way. Sir Gordon Borrie will make a recommendation to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on whether the bid should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. If there were a referral, we would expect to be asked for our views by the commission, and in due course it would publish a report which would contain our views.

Mr. Nelson: Does my hon. Friend agree that conditions have changed significantly since the original bid was made? Moreover, when considering, as the question does, the situation after 1992, does he agree that the defence procurement needs of this country will be far better served by companies on a European basis that have the collaborative research strength and base to compete with some of the biggest defence contractors internationally? I very much hope that, for those reasons, my right hon. and hon. Friends will not make representations to the DTI which will prevent the shareholders of GEC and of Plessey from being able to decide for themselves how best to dispose of their assets.

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure my hon. Friend that the important and relevant factors to which he refers will be fully taken into account in any observations that we make about bids that are made, as opposed to bids that might possibly be made.

AOR Programme

6. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the AOR programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are currently two auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels on order. These vessels, with their ability to replenish both solid stores and fuel, represent a new capability for the Navy. We expect to order further vessels, but no decisions have yet been made on the size and timing of such orders.

Mr. Brown: When does the Minister expect AOR1 to be in service with the Royal Navy? In the meantime, will he confirm that Swan Hunter will be asked to bid for the work on HMS Southampton?

Mr. Sainsbury: On the first part of the question, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware we do not give precise in-service dates for new ships. As he will appreciate, AOR1 is at a relatively early stage of construction, as is AOR2, and it will be two or more years before we expect it to be in service.

HMS Southampton is at her base port, and no decision has yet been made about the best way to re-provide the operational capability that she represents. An investment appraisal is being prepared and will receive urgent consideration.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister confirm that AOR1 is proceeding at Harland and Wolff with the ability that it has displayed in the past and that any delays that may occur are not necessarily the responsibility of the main contractor, because some of the larger sub-contractors may not be delivering according to the time specifications?

Mr. Sainsbury: I can confirm that the construction of AOR1 is proceeding. I have been to Harland and Wolff myself to see the work in progress. It would not be helpful for me to speculate about any arguments or disputes that might take place between principal contractors and sub-contractors on any delays or difficulties that have arisen.

Tank Recovery Vehicles

7. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future programme of orders for tank recovery vehicles.

Mr. Sainsbury: Subject to detailed contract negotiations, we intend to place an order with Vickers Defence Systems Ltd. for the supply of a further 47 Challenger armoured repair and recovery vehicles in the near future.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Minister accept that, on the Scotswood road in Newcastle, where the six prototype tanks of a heavier type to support the Challenger 2 tank fleet are being built as a result of competitive tender, his statement will be widely welcomed?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments and I appreciate that the order for a further 47 important armoured recovery and repair vehicles clearly will represent a considerable amount of useful work for Vickers Defence Systems Ltd.

Mr. Marlow: Could I ask my hon. Friend yet again to look five to 15 years into the future and to look at the potential survivability of the tank and the recovery vehicle? When he comes to the conclusion that many other people have come to—that there is no survivability at all—will he save the money and spend it instead on helicopters?

Mr. Sainsbury: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity in bringing in his argument about the relative values of tanks and helicopters on the battlefield. I assure him that the Ministry of Defence always looks five and 15 years ahead in determining its requirements. It seems that others, such as the Warsaw pact countries, still attach great value to tanks and believe they have a considerable survivability, even on the modern battlefield, because they commit large resources to continuing to produce highly capable tanks.

Mr. Tony Banks: What is wrong with our tanks, then, that they require so many recovery vehicles?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman may be familiar with the fact that, if there were a conflict on the central front—we all hope and pray that there will not—there is a likelihood that some tanks would be hit and would need to be recovered.

Mr. Banks: Send the AA.

Mr. Conway: Despite the criticism of my hon. Friend by the Opposition, may I assure him that the order for 47 vehicles is very much welcomed in Shrewsbury, where the engines are made? Can he tell the House whether this generous order—which will bring much-needed work to my constituency—could have been placed if the Government had taken the Opposition's advice and cut conventional defence expenditure?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. He is right in identifying the point that such an order not only provides work in the location of the principal and main contractors but for a large number of sub-contractors. He is also right to say that we continually hear Opposition criticism of new orders being placed and suggestions that the equipment is not necessary. If their policies were put into effect, the implications for those employed in the British defence industry would be serious.

Tactical Air-to-Surface Missiles

9. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of State for Defence on the development and deployment of the tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are continuing to study a number of options for the replacement of the United Kingdom's free-fall nuclear bomb. A collaborative approach to the development of a successor system remains highly attractive. In this context, we are keeping in very close touch with the United States Government.

Mr. Doran: The Government announced earlier that they were interested in the tactical air-to-surface missile. Will the Minister confirm that they are also interested in the nuclear tactical air-to-surface missile which is being developed by the United States Government? Can he also

confirm that if the missile is developed, it falls within the same category as the cruise missiles, which appear to be being abolished under the INF agreement?

Mr. Hamilton: The answer to the second part of the question is no. The system will be shorter range than anything that comes under the INF agreement. We are interested in this development, but the warhead would be developed by this country.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is very important to provide a stand-off capability for the Tornado aircraft as soon as possible, because its ability to bomb with conventional or, indeed, nuclear free-fall bombs is being degraded progressively by the increased effectiveness of Russian defences?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We do not think that the free-fall bomb will be effective after the end of the century, and we must look for a successor if we are to maintain our policy of flexible response.

Mr. Cartwright: Has the Minister seen recent press reports suggesting that Britain is likely to replace the WE177—a free-fall nuclear bomb—with the United States SRAM T system? Can he say whether there is any truth in those statements, and whether discussions are still continuing about the possibility of an Anglo-French tactical air-to-surface missile?

Mr. Hamilton: We are very interested in the successor to the ASMP French missile rather than the existing one, which will, I think, be getting very old by the time we are talking about bringing the new missile into service. As for our discussions with the Americans, we are looking at two United States systems, one of which is the SRAM-T—the short-range attack missile. I do not know what the "T" stands for. We are also looking at the SLAT—supersonic low-altitude target—drone. No decision has yet been made, however.

Mr. Thurnham: When my hon. Friend meets the United States Secretary of State for Defence will he remind him how necessary it is for American forces to be stationed in Europe, despite the remarks of the West German Admiral Schmäling at the weekend?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. We are constantly reminding our friends in the United States how essential it is that they remain in Europe, and hoping that there will be no withdrawals by United States frontline troops until agreement has been reached under the conventional stability talks.

Mr. Cohen: Although the nuclear-capable TASM—the tactical air-to-surface missile—is classified as a shorter-range bomb, when the bombs are flown from aircraft can they not be lobbed into the range where the INF agreement applies? In that case, would not the forces be cheating on the agreement?

Mr. Hamilton: It is not our intention to breach the INF agreement with the replacement of the free-fall bomb.

Independent Nuclear Deterrent

10. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what point in the arms control process the Government will be willing to discuss a reduction in the United Kingdom strategic independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our policy remains as set out in paragraph 222 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", to the effect that if Soviet and United States strategic arsenals were to be very substantially reduced, and if no significant improvements had occurred in Soviet defence capabilities, we would want to consider how we could best contribute to arms control in the light of the reduced threat.

Mr. Summerson: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that Mr. Gorbachev has been in power for only about four years, and the Communist system remains in its entirety? Will the Government bear that fact in mind when considering future changes in nuclear weapons, so that the future defence of this country may be upheld?

Mr. Hamilton: It is true that the offensive capability of the Soviet Union remains, and we must have a deterrent to stop any Soviet attack in the future.

Mr. Cryer: Is the United Kingdom not obliged, under clause 6 of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty—which we honour and to which we conform—to get rid of our nuclear weapons? Is it not a breach of that treaty and a discouragement of the 135 non-nuclear nations that signed the treaty to deploy nuclear weapons as we do?

Mr. Hamilton: The United Kingdom is not covered by the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. John Greenway: Is it not a fact that Mr. Gorbachev has recognised that the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent is not to be included in the nuclear arms control talks at present?

Mr. Hamilton: That is true, but what we are supporting is the strategic arms reduction talks, which propose a 50 per cent. reduction on both sides. There is no question of our deterrent being included in those talks.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Minister recognise that we are signatories to the non-proliferation treaty, but cannot be signatories to the first Start treaty, although we could well be signatories to the second Start treaty? Have the Government given any consideration to making British nuclear weapons available in the second round of arms reduction talks, following the early completion of the present round between the Soviet Union and the United States?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman knows well, we put much greater importance on the conventional reductions and the global chemical ban, which we think should come first.

Later—

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I asked a supplementary question to question No. 10 on the United Nations non-proliferation treaty. The Minister denied that Britain was a signatory to the treaty. Is it possible to allow a correction to *Hansard* to be made by the Minister because he was incorrect? I know that he is new to the job, but he should be accurate. We are signatories to the treaty. The Minister was corrected by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), but the record in *Hansard* will be misleading. It will show the Minister to be incompetent and will suggest that Britain is not prepared to honour clause 6 of the treaty which obliges us to get rid of nuclear weapons.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I said that Britain was not covered by the treaty; I did not say that we are not a signatory to it.

Chemical Weapons

11. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last had consultations with his United States counterpart on the deployment of chemical weapons.

Mr. Neubert: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions with his United States counterpart on a wide range of defence issues. However, the United Kingdom has not been approached about the possible deployment of United States chemical weapons in the United Kingdom.

Ms. Quin: Will the Government urge the United States to make a speedy response to the recent Soviet announcement on the elimination of chemical weapons stocks? Will they also urge the United States to come up with a timetable for disposing of its own stocks rather than building them up, as seems to be happening at present?

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Lady should not forget that the Soviet Union has the largest and most sophisticated chemical weapons capability in the world. For 18 years, between 1969 and 1987, the United States observed a moratorium on the production of chemical weapons with no response from the Soviet Union. In fact, it was only 18 months ago that the Soviet Union acknowledged that it had any. The Russians have a long way to go, but I am sure that the United States, like Britain, will be glad of their response.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that the rapid progress being made in talks on chemical weapons has a great deal to do with the Government's initiative in the exchange between scientists at the chemical defence establishment at Porton Down and its Russian equivalent last year?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend is right to point to that sequence of events, but it was disappointing that on our bilateral visit to Shikhany we were refused the opportunity to inspect a building that was clearly part of a chemical weapons complex.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is it not the height of hypocrisy for America to point the finger at Libya when the Americans are continuing to manufacture and to build up stocks of chemical weapons?

Mr. Neubert: The United States is right, as we are, to be concerned about the possibility of Libya acquiring a chemical weapons capability. That regime is a self-proclaimed sponsor of international terrorism and the prospect of it having chemical weapons must be of concern to all of us, including, I hope, the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Latham: Is not the only honourable policy to be followed that which Britain followed many years ago—to destroy all stocks of these abominable weapons as soon as possible? Should not any country thinking of building chemical plants abandon the idea immediately?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend is right to point to Britain's record. We abolished our stocks in the late 1950s. However, the American moratorium met with no response and there is always doubt about the effectiveness of such unilateral measures.

Mr. Heffer: Why do the Government always have a negative response to anything that comes out of the Soviet Union? Is it not clear that Mr. Gorbachev has the generals and others breathing down his neck while he is trying to get rid of weapons of all kinds in order to help Russia's economy? Is it not about time that the Government gave a positive response to what Mr. Gorbachev is doing?

Mr. Neubert: We and the Americans have given a positive welcome to what the Soviets have proposed, but, as I have made clear, they have a long way to go and we shall want some assurance, particularly about verification, before we can be satisfied that their proposal will meet the objectives that we all seek.

Mr. Devlin: Are not consultations urgently needed with the American Defence Secretary on the possibility of chemical weapons falling into the hands of terrorist organisations, particularly as one state seems happy to hand over all types of weapons to terrorists? Should not we be intervening to stop that as soon as possible?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend is right. We have close consultations with the Americans on that issue because the proliferation of such weapons in Third world countries which take a different view is a matter of concern to both our nations. The United Kingdom and the Americans are seeking a comprehensive global and verifiable ban, and that will be the best thing.

Mr. Boyes: I welcome the Minister to his new post, particularly after his six years of silence while I have been a Member of the House. I hope to hear some words of wisdom from him, including an undertaking to ask the United States for a commitment to destroy all the 155 mm shells that they have armed to deliver chemical agents on to the battlefield.

Will the Minister also ask the United States to cancel the sixfold increase in the budget for the manufacture of the Big Eye bomb and to match the Soviet Union in a series of unilateral and bilateral steps to eliminate all the obscene and horrendous chemical weapons by the end of 1989?

Mr. Neubert: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. It must be for the Americans to dictate the pace and choice of their weapons policy. They are keen to achieve a comprehensive ban. It was President Reagan's initiative that brought about the Paris conference last weekend. Their good faith is not in doubt.

USSR (Military Reductions)

12. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation short-range modernisation programme of President Gorbachev's proposals for military reductions.

13. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation short-range modernisation programme of President Gorbachev's proposals for military reductions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: President Gorbachev's proposals for a reduction in Soviet conventional forces, if implemented in full, will be a welcome step towards removing the Warsaw pact's significant conventional superiority. However, NATO's requirement to retain the full range of capabilities, nuclear and conventional, in support of its strategy of flexible response, will not change. In order to maintain deterrence at the minimum level of forces, Alliance capabilities must be kept effective and up to date.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that the Montebello decision, rather than short-range weapons, is outdated now that we have the Gorbachev proposals? When will the Prime Minister be big enough to match the proposals? If it is possible to remove troops and tanks from central Europe, is it not time to withdraw nuclear weapons too?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, at Montebello it was agreed to reduce nuclear stockpiles and remove 1,400 shells. However, at the same time, it was agreed that it was necessary to put forward proposals to update our short-range nuclear systems and that is what we are examining now.

Ms. Short: During the afternoon we have constantly heard welcomes for President Gorbachev's disarmament initiatives together with the response that we intend to do nothing in return. Could we think again and be more imaginative and generous? The Minister knows that the plan for short-range modernisation is dividing NATO and is deeply unpopular in Germany. Here is a chance for us to reciprocate, to say that we shall not modernise, but will attempt to achieve further disarmament. Or are the Government not really in favour of multilateral disarmament?

Mr. Hamilton: I must put the hon. Lady right about the deep unpopularity. An agreement was reached to update short-range nuclear systems in October last year. Therefore, there is unanimity on that. If we made other gestures of reductions, we would, merely widen the imbalance between the number of Warsaw pact forces and our own. This is a first step and is welcome, but we want to see subsequent steps which will continue to reduce the imbalance between the forces of both sides.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: It would be churlish not to welcome the latest Soviet proposals. However does my hon. Friend agree that so long as the Soviet Union maintains its present enormous numerical advantage over NATO, and while the Gorbachev era is still at an early stage, it would be the height of folly for the West to be lulled into a false sense of security and to beat its swords into ploughshares?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is correct. The Soviet Union still maintains an aggressive first strike capability in Europe. We must see a change to a defensive posture. That has not yet happened. We must judge the Soviet Union not by what it says but by what it does and by the factual situation in Europe.

Mr. Mates: Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the lessons of the INF treaty? Is it not the case that without our resolve to modernise our weapons there would be no treaty? Is that not the prime reason why we must press ahead with modernisation, while welcoming any steps that the Russians may genuinely take to lower tensions?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. We must continue to negotiate from a position of strength. Any unilateral gestures would undermine our negotiating position rather than enhance it.

Mr. Sean Hughes: Does the Minister envisage a role for tactical nuclear weapons when a conventional balance is reached?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, I think that as part of the flexible response we shall continue to need tactical nuclear weapons, although, of course, we do not exclude any weapons system whatever in the future.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend agree that we have short-range nuclear weapons because of the very large disparity in conventional forces in the field? Will he further agree that while Mr. Gorbachev's proposals are welcome, we would wish to see actual and real reductions before we could ever think of reducing our modernisation programme?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are at present talking in terms of proposals and we have not seen any changes on the ground. We must wait until we see those come through and see subsequent reductions as a result of the conventional stability talks which should be going ahead this year.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

The Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Smith: Many families in this country are this month facing increases in their mortgage repayments of between £50 and £100 a month. For how long will millions of home owners have to suffer as a result of the Chancellor's blind determination to use one weapon and one weapon only—interest rates—to control the explosion of credit which the Government have themselves helped to generate?

The Prime Minister: The Chancellor puts as top priority the reduction of inflation—*[Interruption.]* I notice that this question is asked by a member of a party which during its term in office never got inflation below 7·4 per cent. The top priority must be the reduction of inflation, and the interest rate weapon is the main one. I should also point out that the Chancellor has a more than balanced budget —unlike the position under Labour Chancellors—and that, too, is a significant feature in his fiscal stance.

Q2. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanley: Those affected by the tragic air disasters that have occurred in the last few weeks, in Scotland and in the east midlands, will be grateful for the interest and compassion shown by the Prime Minister in visiting the sites so promptly. Will she do all she can to guarantee to keep the skies as safe as possible for those who travel by air and for those who live under the flight paths?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. Of course I went to the scene in all cases of recent tragedies and of course we all thank most earnestly the wonderful emergency services—the ambulances, doctors, nurses, police and armed forces who have been helping. They are different teams on each occasion. They are all excellent.

The most difficult thing, as my hon. Friend points out, is giving condolences to the bereaved. There is very little one can do to comfort them, except to be there and know that they realise how much we feel for them. We all want the skies to be safe. There will be a fuller statement on both these matters later, after Question Time.

Sir Russell Johnston: Returning to the question of interest rates, will the Prime Minister reflect on the fact that interest rates in West Germany, which has no oil reserves, are at 3·5 per cent. as against our 13 per cent. plus? Surely part of the reason for this must be related first to an imprudent budget and secondly to our continued failure to join the European monetary system.

The Prime Minister: No. It is due to years and years of discipline in the German financial system, with the German people accepting that they must, above all, have policies which keep inflation down and that they must watch their unit labour costs accordingly.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my right hon. Friend accept that the people of Lockerbie and bereaved families from many countries deeply appreciate her two visits to the town and her support and comfort to all concerned? Will she accept that the visits of her Ministers to the town were also welcome, and that the fact that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House attended the memorial service was also much appreciated? Meanwhile, the thoughts of Lockerbie are with Kegworth and the British Midland casualties.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Those of us who went had the greatest possible respect and admiration for the way in which the people of Lockerbie and the local services met the appalling tragedy which befell them one evening, and similarly, for the excellent way in which the people of the east midlands tackled their great tragedy. It is almost impossible to think that we should have two such tragedies in such a short time. If anything was obtained from the disasters it was the marvellous spirit that arose in tackling the problems.

Q3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Prime Minister explain her honour to Mr. Evelyn de Rothschild whose main contribution was to set up in Switzerland to pay less United Kingdom tax?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not ask questions about the honours list in the House.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Prime Minister comment on her new proposals for the poll tax? We all know that folk are about to be hammered and hounded for the poll tax. Why should they not resist when the message from the Government's supporters, honoured by the Prime Minister, is "Can pay, won't pay"?

The Prime Minister: I quite understand that the Opposition oppose the community charge because they do not want readily available criteria by which Labour local authorities can be judged on their extravagant expenditure.

Mr. Curry: As John McCarthy spends his 1000th day in captivity, will my right hon. Friend reassure the families of British hostages held in the middle east that the Government will use all honourable means, eschewing contact with terrorists, to guarantee their release?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Our thoughts are very much with the British hostages and their families, particularly at this season. As my hon. Friend knows, we follow up every possible lead on their whereabouts. Our ambassador in Beirut is particularly active in that, but he knows that it is not easy to find answers to those most difficult subjects. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, during his visit to the Gulf has made it quite clear that we think that the hostages should be freed and that now is the time to do it. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) did the same at his recent meeting with the Iranian Foreign Minister. As my hon. Friend said, we shall not pay ransoms or do deals for hostages. Any civilised nation should do the utmost to see that hostages are released.

Mr. Kinnock: First, I strongly commend the efforts so far made on behalf of Mr. McCarthy and others and urge upon the Prime Minister further similar efforts to achieve the result which every civilised person must want.

Secondly, is the Prime Minister willing to allow GEC to fall into foreign hands?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will know precisely what is the law passed by this House on any proposed merger. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I must act in accordance with the law passed by the House. Under the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Director General of Fair Trading has a legal responsibility to advise the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on whether a merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is required to take into account the advice of the director general in reaching a decision on whether to refer a bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The right hon. Gentleman should be very much aware that we have to follow the law passed by the House.

Mr. Kinnock: I am well aware of the law and the interpretation which the Government have successively put upon the law. I am also aware of the activity of Sir Gordon Borrie. Surely the Government have a view about an issue of such strategic industrial and technological importance. Will the Prime Minister give us the Government's view? Does she consider that it would be in the national interest for GEC to fall into foreign ownership?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is inviting me to prejudge the result of a legal process which, by law, we must undertake. Is it his policy that we should be able to override the law passed by this House just because he asks us to do so?

Mr. Page: As it is impossible to wipe out the knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether, if every country with nuclear weapons were persuaded to remove that capability and if a conventional war broke out and we were winning, she could give a guarantee that the opposition would not use that knowledge of how to make a nuclear weapon to redress the balance—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Page: If my right hon. Friend cannot give that guarantee, is not the best solution for the security of this nation a small, powerful nuclear deterrent?

The Prime Minister: History has shown that conventional weapons are not sufficient to ensure the defence of freedom in this country. If ever they were totally abolished and a conventional war were to break out again, the race would be on to see who could gain nuclear weapons first and we should be back in the same kind of position that we were in at the end of the last war. Nuclear weapons have kept the peace for 40 years. We should not abandon them until we are sure that we have something even safer to protect us and to deter any aggressor.

Q4. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Prime Minister share the concern of Opposition Members that the Government's target take-up of 60 per cent. for family credit has not been reached and that the take-up is currently below 40 per cent.? What do the Government intend to do about that? Will the Prime Minister look especially at form FC1, which has 16 pages, 13 sections and almost 200 questions? That form is unacceptable, unnecessarily complex and should be simplified as a matter of urgency.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware—we have debated this subject before—that it is our intention to do everything possible to increase the numbers of those who can claim family credit to obtain it. We have looked carefully and recently at the numbers of people who do not claim family credit. Generally we found that those families that could expect a substantial amount from family credit claim it and that those who do not claim are those who are only on the margin. That is the broad, general conclusion. We do our level best to see that all who are entitled can claim.

Mr. Conway: During the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend take time to speak to the chairman of the anti-British Broadcasting Corporation about the "Panorama" programme that was screened last night, which showed a Sinn Fein spokesman, with an actor's voice dubbed over, attempting—pathetically—to justify the murders of Light Infantry soldiers last year? Will my right hon. Friend ask the chairman of the BBC when the widows and children of those murdered are likely to get a right of reply?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made his own point effectively and I have no doubt that it will be noticed in the appropriate quarters. I well remember the letter that I received from the mother of a soldier who has been murdered. Referring to the electronic media she stated:

"They talk about the freedom of the press and the media. Where is freedom of my son?"

Q6. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Does the Prime Minister recognise that in the first seven months of this financial year, the Burnley office has used only 17·1 per cent. of the money available in community care grants under the new social fund and that that figure is higher than the figures for some other offices? Does she further recognise that many people in this country are suffering extreme poverty and deprivation as a result of the new system? Will she also acknowledge the words of her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to the Select Committee on Social Services just before Christmas and undertake to hold an urgent review of the procedures and the rules to ensure that such people get the help to which they are entitled as speedily as possible?

The Prime Minister: We are anxious that people should get the help to which they are entitled. That is the way in which the local offices discharge their duties and the appropriate appeal procedures. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the enormously increased resources that have been made available for all the social security services, going up from about £17 billion 10 years ago to £50 billion this year—an increase of 38 per cent. in real terms. That is what the Government have been able to do to increase the amount of money available for the poorest section of our community.

Mr. Brazier: As my right hon. Friend comes towards the end of her first 10 years as Prime Minister, will she confirm that during that time we have had exactly 10 Budgets—not one more—and that the reason we enjoy so much greater prosperity today is precisely that the Government have consistently stuck to clear, long-term aims, rather than bending to the latest fashion in economics?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I warmly endorse that. We shall keep the reduction of inflation as the top priority. I am the first to accept that it is the steady and right economic policies which have greatly increased the prosperity of the people of this country and the amount going to the social services, and which have kept us with a staunch and sure defence.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, in relation to Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it after the statements.

Air Crash (East Midlands)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the aircraft accident that occurred on Sunday evening, near East Midlands international airport.

Just before 8 pm last Sunday evening, 8 January 1989, a British Midland Airways Boeing 737 aircraft began a scheduled flight, BD 092, from London Heathrow to Belfast. About 15 minutes into the flight, the pilot reported a fire in the starboard engine. The fire was apparently successfully dealt with and the captain asked for permission to divert to East Midlands airport for an emergency landing.

Eye witnesses report that, during the final approach to East Midlands airport, the aircraft descended below the normal path with the engine, or engines, making unusual noises. The aircraft crashed just short of the airport onto the M1 motorway, near Kegworth, coming to rest in three main pieces on the motorway embankment.

There were 126 persons on board, including eight crew. Forty-four fatalities have been recorded. Most of the survivors are injured to a greater or lesser degree. Some are still seriously ill and in intensive care.

Accompanied by my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping and my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, I went to the scene of the accident. My colleagues and I were greatly impressed by the skill and the efficiency of the rescue services and the help given by local organisations and residents. The fire, police, hospital, ambulance and rescue services involved all deserve the highest praise. Without their speed, skill and dedication, there would have been many more fatalities. The House will wish to join me both in praising all those involved and in an expression of deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of those who died, and wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

My chief inspector of air accidents went to the site on Sunday evening with nine of his staff and immediately began an investigation. Representatives from the manufacturers of the aircraft and engines—from the United States and France—arrived on Monday to assist in the investigation.

Investigators found evidence consistent with a shut-down in flight of the right engine before impact, and evidence of a fire in the left engine. They are now concentrating on information about the engines from the flight data and cockpit voice recorders, both of which were recovered. We do not yet know the precise cause of the engine failure and, as in all such accidents, speculation can be not only unproductive but positively misleading.

I shall ensure that the House is kept fully informed of any significant findings of the investigation and that a bulletin will be published as soon as possible.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I offer our deepest sympathies to the relatives and friends of the dead and to those who have been injured in the British Midlands Airways Boeing 737 crash.

The whole nation is horrified at two major air disasters in less than three weeks. The calamity of a crash on a village community was clearly averted only by the supreme efforts and skill of the captain and his crew. Even in these tragic circumstances, the House and, indeed the nation, will want to record our deepest appreciation to Captain Hunt and wish him, the crew and all other survivors a speedy recovery.

In less than four weeks Britain has suffered three major transport tragedies involving rail and aviation, with more than 300 deaths. The House and the country once again express admiration and heartfelt thanks to those in our public emergency services—the police, the armed forces, the fire brigade, the ambulance and hospital services and, at Kegworth, the Automobile Association, a miners' rescue team and other members of the public. Undoubtedly their efforts saved lives.

We have come to expect the highest professionalism, dedication and courage from our emergency services, which on every occasion, rightly earns them the deepest gratitude of the nation.

An unprecedented collection of transport tragedies involving shipping, aviation, oil rigs and the railways have occurred in all parts of the United Kingdom. They have involved not one national elite emergency force, but different regional emergency services, which have all provided excellence that is not only a credit to their professionalism, but of great comfort to those involved in such tragedies. They are a credit to our country, and we rightly salute them.

Today is not the time for searching questions. The inquiry is under way and the answers and the lessons will be available soon enough. However, I ask the Secretary of State to consider some issues that have been brought to my attention and to which the inquiry should address itself. Will he consider instructing the inquiry to go beyond the traditional approach of rightly discovering what went wrong, by specifically considering the extent and type of the injuries suffered by the passengers and crew?

Will the inquiry consider how, in crash landings, passengers may be better protected by, for example, having the seating facing the rear of the plane, as in military air transport? Will the inquiry also take evidence about the advisability of long flights over water by twin-engined commercial aircraft? In the event of a double engine failure, that would inevitably mean total loss. Is there not a danger of being lulled into a false sense of security by quoting the statistics for the chance of such a failure as being many millions to one?

The Secretary of State will be aware that the East Midlands is one of our fastest growing airports and that it has been considering extending its runways to bring them within yards of the M1 and the A43. Such an area is known as the public safety zone, which prevents building in the flight path area. Will the inquiry take into consideration the possibility of tunnelling major roads under the flight path, which undoubtedly would have have allowed that aircraft a better chance of landing safely?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, especially for his initial remarks, which I am sure the whole House supported, in particular his references to the AA and other local people and organisations that helped so much on this appalling occasion.

My right hon. Friends and I will carefully consider the last point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). There is more than one side to the argument about backward-facing seats. Backward-facing seats would give a greater chance of

survival in a relatively small number of accidents. In minor accidents, the present seats and belts are adequate. In a major accident, the disruption to the aircraft structure releases any form of seating restraint and that can result in fatalities and serious injuries. Of course, that does not mean that we will not reconsider this matter, but the argument is not one-sided.

The hon. Gentleman raised an important point about the possibility of twin-engined aircraft flying on one engine over water. Special rules apply to twin-engined aircraft that must fly for more than 90 minutes from an aerodrome at which they could land. That did not apply to that particular aircraft.

Before I get into questions of engine failure and what should happen to such aeroplanes in those circumstances, it would be wiser to discover exactly what did occur on this occasion. I shall, however, consider what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his firm refusal to speculate in advance of the inquiry report upon the causes of this accident has given great comfort to the professionals in the air transport industry and, I believe, to those who are involved in any way whatsoever? Is he also aware that the similar reluctance of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will also bring comfort? Will he undertake that this investigation will be pressed forward and that at least preliminary results will be made available as soon as possible in order not only that all those concerned can take the appropriate actions but that confidence can be restored in the air transport industry?

Mr. Channon: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. I am sure it is wrong for me, or indeed for anyone, to speculate at the present time, and I am grateful for his support on that issue. This investigation will be pressed forward as quickly as possible, and if there are things that can be said, possibly in the not too distant future, they will be said at the earliest possible moment, so that we may have the effect that my right hon. Friend has in mind.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Is the Minister aware that we on this Bench wish to associate ourselves very much with the condolences already offered to the victims of this ghastly crash and to those whose families were suddenly and sadly bereaved? We applaud the courage of the pilot and we also very much congratulate the rescue services on their care and efficiency. I think that most Members of Parliament fly regularly, and it is very easy for us to associate ourselves with this appalling accident. The Minister quite clearly cannot give us detailed answers, but he will know that we will want the most rigorous examination and, most particularly, assurances as soon as possible about the aircraft type's continued safety in use.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right on all those points. I appreciate what he has said. I appreciate the House's desire to have information at the earliest possible moment. We will do what we can in all those areas.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I thank my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for coming so promptly to my constituency following the tragedy to give comfort to the bereaved and injured and encouragement to the services. May I also join the villagers of Kegworth in paying tribute to Captain Kevin Hunt, the captain of the airliner? He showed courage and tremendous skill as a result of his training in getting his crippled aircraft almost on to the runway.

I also pay tribute to the services themselves and also to the training of the firemen and the police, which showed through when it was required. Finally, does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest tribute should be paid to the army of helpers, to the Salvation Army, to the social services, to the many volunteers and the many voluntary services and also to the villagers of Kegworth, who showed great heroism at the time in helping the injured and bereaved?

Mr. Channon: Yes. I endorse entirely what my hon. Friend says and, as he will know from his own experiences in the last 36 hours or so, the remarkable thing was the number of helpers who came forward. Indeed, there were so many helpers that at one moment, some almost had to be turned away. It was a remarkable local effort, as well as one by the emergency services to whom tribute has been paid. I endorse everything my hon. Friend has said and I am grateful to him for his remarks.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): As my party's spokesman on transport and the constituency Member for the Belfast international airport, which was the destination of flight BD 092, may I join the Minister and other right hon. and hon. Members in their expressions of sympathy to the bereaved and their hope for a speedy recovery of the injured? Will the Minister pass on the grateful thanks of the Northern Ireland relatives and friends of passengers involved in the crash to the emergency services for their tremendous efforts during the rescue operation; and, of course, our admiration for the pilot, whose skill in minimising the crash was admirable? Our thanks also go to the local hospitals which have done such a good job in looking after the injured.

I am sure that the Minister will also wish to join me in congratulating the Belfast airport and British Midlands staff, who, along with clergymen, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Samaritans and the Salvation Army, among others, were magnificent in looking after and comforting relatives during the long and stressful night after the announcement of the disaster. I believe it to be a privilege to have been allowed to share in that work during the early hours of the morning. Therefore, I speak from first-hand knowledge. I welcome the full investigation that is taking place. I hope that the result will be announced as soon as possible.

Mr. Channon: Again, I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. What he has said has been said to me during the last day or so by many people from Northern Ireland who were on the flight. I have seen many of the relatives and some of the injured in the hospital that I visited. They were full of praise, as the hon. Gentleman said, for the emergency services and for the work of the hospitals. I am very glad that, as a Northern Ireland Member of Parliament, he should have said so in this House. I strongly support what he said, and I am grateful to him.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): While expressing sympathy with those who have suffered in this tragedy, may I ask my right hon. Friend to consider another point which is also relevant to the Lockerbie and Clapham

[Mr. Terence L. Higgins]

disasters? Some of the suffering may be alleviated if those who fear that relatives or friends may be involved in a particular accident can establish whether that is so as soon as possible. Will my right hon. Friend consider whether there should be a single emergency number for such purposes and whether suitable arrangements could be made with the telecommunications services to ensure that replies are given as urgently as possible?

Mr. Channon: I am not sure that that is a matter for me, but I shall consult my right hon. Friends on that point. The one point of criticism that one hears is the difficulty of getting through on the lines to obtain information, because it is often not available. People do not want to give inaccurate information. However, my right hon. Friend has made a perfectly valid and good point and I shall look into it.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): While joining in the expressions of sympathy to the bereaved and injured, can I press the Minister to do all that he possibly can to speed up the process of inquiry? Does he recall that the fire accident in a Boeing 737 at Manchester airport, which cost over 50 lives, occurred on 22 August 1985? We are still awaiting a full and definitive report on that accident and, while I accept that there is need for deep thoroughness in investigations, will the Minister accept that, if speeding up inquiries can save lives, then urgency is extremely urgent?

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman made a similar point to me not long ago in a supplementary question. I have considerable sympathy for his point. Very special circumstances surrounded the Manchester disaster. The report will be published in March. I take note of the general feeling throughout the House that we want to get to the bottom of this tragedy at the earliest possible moment. Even if the full report cannot be published for some time, I know that there is a general desire in the House that we should take steps to provide an interim report, or an interim bulletin, which might satisfy the House. I am determined to do that, and I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): As my right hon. Friend is aware, the pilot and a large number of those in the emergency and hospital services are my constituents. Captain Hunt's family has asked me to pass on their thanks to everyone concerned for all their help and for all their good wishes. I thank also my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other right hon. Friends for the dignity and the compassion that they have shown on their visits to the east midlands and on other visits of a similar sad nature. Those visits are very much appreciated by the local people. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that the marvellous co-operation between the emergency services from three counties was a model of its kind? Will he ensure that the lessons of how it should be done are learned for the future?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about that. The liaison between the various hospitals was quite extraordinary and extremely efficient. I know that Captain Hunt is one of my hon. Friend's constituents. I saw Captain and Mrs. Hunt yesterday and I know that my hon. Friend has been in touch with them. I am sure that the whole House wishes Captain Hunt a speedy recovery from his injuries. I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I join in expressing sorrow to those people who have suffered and are still suffering as a result of this tragedy and in paying tribute to the rescue workers from Leicestershire and other neighbouring counties who saved so many lives? However, having regard to the deep concern felt by all air crew and all air passengers as a result of this and similar accidents, I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) in asking that steps be taken urgently to check the engines of the sister aircraft. Many people are worried because the accident involved a comparatively new aircraft. In those circumstances, surely it would be wise to make checks on other aircraft now rather than waiting for the result of an inquiry, when we have already waited so long for the result of an inquiry into a similar accident. Meanwhile, rightly or wrongly, thousands of people feel that they are at risk.

Mr. Channon: I understand the hon. and learned Member's concern and I agree with the first part of what he said. I visited Leicester royal infirmary yesterday and I can say from first-hand knowledge that its accident department has done a remarkable job.

At present, there are only four aeroplanes with similar engines in this country. None of them is in operation at present, so I can meet the hon. and learned Gentleman's point while the investigation makes progress.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the Minister will be aware that some of my constituents were killed and others injured in the tragedy that took place on Sunday evening. I am also sure that he is aware that I and the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) had the sad duty of conveying to some of the relatives the tragic news about their families.

The Minister will be aware that those people deeply appreciate the work done by all the emergency services and especially the heroism—I use that term deliberately—of the captain of the flight. The people of Northern Ireland are grateful. As I sat with the relatives, they said that everything was in good hands and that everything possible was being done to alleviate the situation. I should like to put that firmly on the record. I am grateful for the expressions of gratitude made by Members on both sides of the House. When I visited my injured constituents in the three hospitals yesterday, they all paid tribute to the nurses, doctors and those who have looked after them so well.

I wish to ask one question. Will money be available immediately to those people who may need financial help? Families have been completely devastated; in some cases, the breadwinner of the family has gone and there may be a need for immediate financial aid. Can the Minister help us on that?

Finally, as there is so much talk today about the plane's engines, will the Minister assure the House that the inquiry's findings will be fully published so that everyone will know the facts?

Mr. Channon: I met quite a few of the hon. Gentleman's constituents yesterday, and I endorse what he said. I am grateful to him for his comments about the work of the emergency services and the hospitals.

I shall certainly take immediate steps to inquire about the point that the hon. Gentleman rightly raises about money being made available immediately to those people who are in financial difficulty as a result of this appalling disaster.

As to the hon. Gentleman's point about the engines, and in answer to other points made earlier, I should make it clear that the air accidents investigation branch passes its recommendations to the Civil Aviation Authority immediately. It does not wait until the report is published, so, even if the final report is not published for some time, any action that needs to be taken in the interim is taken. I undertake to ensure that that is done.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): As a fellow Leicestershire Member, may I join the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) in praising the emergency services of the county—in particular, the work of the royal infirmary? In passing, we should note that there are proposals to close eight of the hospitals in Leicestershire; I hope that, because of the work of the emergency services, that will be reviewed.

On 5 January, I wrote to the Secretary of State about aircraft flight paths over urban areas. Although that letter dealt specifically with low-flying aircraft and this aircraft was flying at a high altitude, my constituents are anxious and distressed about the various activities in Leicestershire's aerodromes, specifically at air displays, which have resulted in nuisance. Vulcan bombers have often flown over houses in Evington. Would the Secretary of State look carefully at that issue and reply to me as soon as possible so that I can reassure my constituents?

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly reply to the hon. Gentleman. I hope to make an announcement on the regulation of air displays in the near future which I hope that he will find satisfactory. I endorse what he says about Leicester royal infirmary. His remarks about the closure of hospitals are more properly directed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, to whose attention I shall draw them.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): In echoing sympathy to the relatives of the victims and thanks to the emergency services, I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to one issue which arises from this dreadful tragedy: that Sunday's tragedy happened close to an airport, where the local police were trained in air crash victim recovery, as they are at Heathrow, which sent 23 officers to Lockerbie. In the circumstances, will my right hon. Friend ask the Home Secretary to ensure that the police experience gained in these tragedies is recorded while it is still fresh in mind, and is made available to all police forces? Will he consider discussing with the Home Secretary the possibility of setting up a national police unit which will be available to any force to assist with air crash victim recovery, should it so dreadfully be necessary again?

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend is here and will have taken note of what my hon. Friend said about that important matter. The need to pool the best experience in this area is obviously clear and must be done. All the evidence is that in these appalling disasters the emergency services have functioned with the utmost skill and success, and it is almost impossible to think of ways in which they could be improved. My hon. Friend puts his finger on a point which may need consideration, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend will consider it.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): May I join other Leicestershire Members in paying respect to the professionalism and expertise of the emergency services and the armed forces, and in particular, to those at Leicester royal infirmary, which is in my constituency? They showed a high level of expertise and skill, and certainly have done a great deal to save many lives. I hope that my right hon. Friend will not feel that it prejudices the inquiry if I ask whether he can say whether the East Midlands airport at Castle Donnington was the nearest suitable airport for the aircraft to land.

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. I had the privilege of visiting Leicester royal infirmary yesterday. It did a remarkable job. Many volunteered, and it was a thoroughly professional operation. People were brought in by helicopter from the site. I am sure that the hospital should be and is proud of its performance. Clearly, the inquiry will have to establish whether it was the nearest suitable airport for the pilot to attempt a landing. I had better not comment on that this afternoon. All will become clear in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): May I add my tribute to and admiration of all involved in the emergency services, many of whom come from my adjoining constituency of Erewash, and of all those members of the public who courageously contributed to the rescue work, in stark contrast to the large crowds of ghoulish spectators who arrived on the scene and hindered the rescue operation?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with his comments about the enormous number of people who helped and did an excellent job.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In view of all the accolades and tributes that, quite properly, have been paid to the public sector fire service, public sector ambulance service and public sector hospital services—with BUPA nowhere to be found—may we have the Minister's guarantee, especially since the Prime Minister is seated next to him, that none of those services will be privatised?

Mr. Channon: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I join the expressions of heartfelt sympathy to the relatives of victims and those injured in this terrible tragedy, which claimed the lives of a number of my constituents. I pay tribute also to the emergency services, whose actions, as the right hon. Gentleman said, undoubtedly helped to save a number of lives. Will the Secretary of State again consider the question of compensation? Not only is there a need for immediate payment of compensation due under the terms of the Chicago convention: in the light of present circumstances, does he accept the need for an enhanced volume of compensation for the victims of civil disasters such as this?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's first comments. As to compensation, he will appreciate that it was a domestic flight. As I understand the compensation rules, they are governed by United Kingdom law, and all UK-licensed airlines are required to

[Mr. Channon]

enter into special contracts providing for liability limits of about £70,000. That arrangement must be reviewed from time to time.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): We have been continually reading and hearing that the odds against two engines of an aircraft failing are many millions to one. Does that figure have any practical application? Can the Secretary of State put it into perspective by telling the House how many twin-engined aircraft flights take place worldwide every year? Also, can he say whether, on the aircraft that crashed, the two engines' coolant or lubricant systems were in any way linked?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important question, but it is one for the investigation to consider; I hope that he will forgive me if I do not answer now. It is a factor that will be examined, along with many others, in the course of the investigation.

I do not have to hand the number of flights by twin-engined aircraft taking place worldwide every year, but possibly the hon. Gentleman is making a point that, in general, remains very true—that, among all forms of travel, air transport is still extremely safe.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Further to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), if, in advance of establishing the cause of the accident, it is possible to make an interim announcement at least eliminating some possible causes about which there has been speculation, will my right hon. Friend give favourable consideration to that course, so as to give some reassurance to the travelling public?

Mr. Channon: Yes, Sir.

Lockerbie Air Disaster

4.2 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I fear that this will be a somewhat longer statement. I am sorry to inflict two statements upon the House, but it will wish to be kept in touch with events relating to the Lockerbie air disaster.

On 28 December, the inspector in charge of the accident investigation at Lockerbie announced that the aircraft had been destroyed by the detonation of high explosive. A team from my air accident investigation branch, assisted by people from the local emergency services and armed forces, has been working to find out where in the aircraft the bomb was placed. The chief inspector of air accidents is today issuing a bulletin that narrows the area to that of the No. 1 cargo and baggage hold just forward of the wing. It is too early to say yet where the article containing the explosive orginated.

It may help the House if I explain how the investigation is organised. Because the incident happened in his area, the chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway is in charge of the police investigation under the supervision of the procurator fiscal. The chief investigating officer is a chief superintendent of the Strathclyde police, and he is being given extensive assistance by other police forces in this country, including the metropolitan police, and by the FBI both in Lockerbie and in the United States. The investigators here have close links with the German police who are investigating the incident in Frankfurt, and other authorities in Europe and elsewhere who may be able to help to trace the movements of the passengers and their contacts immediately beforehand.

It is an enormous task recovering the wreckage and indentifying and tracing the passengers. It is being tackled with great professionalism and dedication. We owe all those involved a great debt of gratitude. Every effort is being made to find the perpetrators of this outrage and to bring them to justice.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are also very deeply aware of the traumatic effects of this disaster on the people of Lockerbie. The Government have contributed £150,000 to the Lockerbie air disaster fund, and my right hon. and learned Friend and his officials are pursuing with Dumfries and Galloway regional council the question of wider costs arising from the disaster.

It is essential that we discover who put the bomb on the aircraft and how it got there. We must await the progress of the investigation. The signs of the use of a high performance plastic explosive—which was very probably, but not certainly, Semtex—point to a well-organised and well-supplied terrorist group. If that proves to be the case, I am sure that the House will join the Government and the Governments of most nations to condemn not only the despicable murderers themselves but any country which has supplied them, trained them, housed them or encouraged them.

There has been much speculation about the origin of the article in which the explosive was placed on the aircraft. I hope that the extensive, painstaking and detailed work on the wreckage, which is still being recovered, will eventually establish which consignment contained the bomb. It cannot help those seeking to discover the facts to speculate, and I am not prepared to do so.

The fact that a bomb was on board an aircraft flying from Heathrow obviously raises questions about aviation security in this country. Security at our airports is acknowledged to be among the best in the world. Yet an aircraft with all its passengers and crew has been lost, and there have been grievous casualties on the ground. Immediate steps, in consultation with the Federal Aviation Authority and with the United States airlines, have been taken to increase security for those airlines' scheduled operations at Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester and Prestwick.

Those measures were promulgated as soon as the accident investigator's announcement that the aircraft was destroyed by an explosive device was made on 28 December; the came into effect the next day. They require additional hold and cabin baggage checks, including checks of all baggage transferred from other aircraft, and more stringent requirements for protecting aircraft while they are on the ground. I am grateful for the co-operation we have had from the United States authorities and airlines and the airports.

Subsequently, on 5 January, I met the National Aviation Security Committee, which held a special meeting to discuss the implications of the Lockerbie disaster. The committee, which comprises representatives of the aviation industry, police and Government Departments, was joined by representative's of the FAA and the police team investigating the incident. The committee endorsed the measures already taken by my Department and the FAA. In the light of the committee's discussion, I decided to take immediately further measures in relation to cargo, misrouted baggage and cabin baggage. Other measures, which are now being vigorously pursued, were identified for the longer term.

One aspect of the tragedy that has attracted particular attention is the so-called warning in a security bulletin issued by the United States Federal Aviation Administration to United States airlines. Warnings and threats of one kind or another are an all too common occurrence in the civil aviation industry. My Department arranges for each one to be assessed in the light of other intelligence, and then considers whether any changes need to be made to the relevant security measures. In the rare circumstances when such changes are considered necessary, the airports and airlines concerned are always informed of the warning and of the action that they should take.

The United States aviation authorities operate a different approach, which is to issue frequent bulletins to their airlines and overseas officials giving details of the threats received. A copy of the FAA bulletin in question was received by my Department on 9 December. As is usually the case, it contained the explicit caveat that it was not to be further disseminated without the specific approval of the FAA's director of civil aviation security. It referred to a warning made by an anonymous telephone call to the United States embassy in Helsinki on 5 December.

The bulletin was subjected to the assessment process I have already mentioned. In this case, the United States authorities were asked for their assessment. We were given to understand that they had been in touch with the Finnish authorities. The Finnish police had made a full investigation of the call and previous calls of a similar nature and had concluded that these calls had little credibility. United States airlines were already subject to enhanced security measures. The warning was no more significant than many others received in the past, and it was concluded that it did not warrant enhancing those measures still further.

While the warning identified the airline and the Frankfurt-United States route, no mention was made of London, and the warning threatened that an attack would take place within two weeks, which expired before the tragedy took place on 21 December.

Aviation is an international industry and terrorism knows no boundaries. The security procedures we follow derive from international standards laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. We have joined the United States Government in asking the council of ICAO to condemn this attack against aviation and to work urgently to improve standards of security. We shall also mobilise the support of friendly countries and pursue the subject in other appropriate international fora.

This was a hideous, murderous and indiscriminate attack on innocent people. It will have served only to intensify our efforts to protect travellers and to fortify our implacable resolve to defeat international terrorism.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The House will welcome this full statement by the Secretary of State confirming the rumours at the time of the last statement that the aeroplane was destroyed by a high explosive and raising the major issues of who and why, and of airport and aircraft security.

This morning I received a rather moving telephone call from a mother whose son died in the tragedy. She complained about the difficulties of identifying bodies in these circumstances—they were also evident in the American example. I hope that the Secretary of State will take this opportunity to examine the procedures for identifying people who have died in such tragedies and for allowing relatives easy access, when possible, to do that.

By confirming that this was a bomb, the Secretary of State raises the question why the Government did not inform the House earlier—on the last occasion when the right hon. Gentleman made a statement—about information that they held. The right hon. Gentleman knows, and his statement confirmed, that the information received about the company, the plane, the route and the time—to within two days—was all accurate.

The fact that the Secretary of State says that the information did not identify the fact that the flight would pass through London is not a source of comfort but another example of the way in which the Government ignored the seriousness of the threat. It is another example of how the Secretary of State—he has confirmed this in a letter given me a few minutes ago—deliberately withheld this information because he did not want to fuel speculation about the cause of the loss of the aircraft.

The right hon. Gentleman knows that I appealed to the House on the day of his previous statement not to speculate about the cause. So why did the Secretary of State, within half an hour of leaving the House, confirm on public radio precisely the information that he has now confirmed to the House so many days later? Why did he confirm on radio on the Friday morning exactly the information which would presumably have fuelled the speculation that he wanted to prevent—the reason he used to justify not giving the information to the House?

I wrote asking for such a justification, but I was not aware then that the Secretary of State was leaving for his

[Mr. John Prescott]

holidays, a judgment with which I publicly disagreed—*[Interruption.]* I now ask the Secretary of State to justify why he was prepared to give this information to a public radio programme half an hour after the House had heard a statement which was incomplete. We expected nothing less than a full statement from the right hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State must be aware that, when he makes statements at difficult times, hon. Members will refrain from asking certain questions—that has been evident from earlier statements—because of the tragic circumstances. But that requires him to observe the obligation to provide as much information as he can to the House so that we can make a proper assessment. Does the Secretary of State accept that, if he had given the information to the House, many of us would have changed our line of questioning—naturally—to airport and aeroplane security?

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will now justify why he deliberately withheld this information from the House. It is a serious matter. It shows the difference between the way in which the Secretary of State acted on the information and the way in which other authorities—the Americans and the Germans—did. Does he accept that their response to the same quality of information was to increase security at their airports and on their aeroplanes and, in the case of the American authorities, to warn American embassies, some of which carried the warning on their notice boards? That shows the importance and the priority that they gave to this quality of information.

Do the same procedures for evaluating the many bomb threats that the right hon. Gentleman's Department receives in Britain still apply now? Clearly, they failed to deal adequately with this threat. The Secretary of State has told the House that, on receipt of this information, he inquired about and reviewed safety at Heathrow and on this airline, and was satisfied that the enhanced security was sufficient. So why was the British Airports Authority not informed of the enhanced security, or of the threat? Why did the American and German authorities increase security in response to it more than we in Britain did?

Is not the real tragic lesson of Lockerbie that it revealed muddles in procedure, excessive secrecy and insufficient priority for security cover at Britain's airports, which was exposed in a report by the Select Committee on Transport, issued in October 1986? That report was initiated at the request of my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who was concerned about our airport security, and it exposed the inadequacies of security at Britain's airports. I ask the Secretary of State and his Department to review their response to that report. They rejected many of its major recommendations—the establishment of an aviation security inspectorate, and the re-establishment of an aviation security fund, paid for by levy, to pay for necessary equipment. Such a fund was established by a Labour Government in 1978 and dismantled by this Government in 1983 to cut costs.

We ask the right hon. Gentleman, too, to replace the many confusing private security firms, with a national airport police, and to reverse the trend of issuing advisory notes, rather than directions, on security. Above all, will the Secretary of State now reject his Department's response to the Select Committee's recommendation for banding machinery? It rejected the proposal not only on the grounds of cost but—apparently—because of the lack of available power points and space at counters in our airports. That attitude is not acceptable in the Department responsible for security at our airports.

Finally, it is clear beyond doubt from the many public expressions of support for such things, that the travelling public are quite prepared to wait a little longer and pay a little more if that will improve aviation security. They expect the Government to ensure that an adequate level of safety and security is established; they are far from convinced that that is being achieved now.

Mr. Channon: I shall start with the non-controversial point made by the hon. Gentleman about the procedures for the identification of bodies. I shall certainly look into them, but in the distressing case of Lockerbie I believe that only 39 bodies could be identified in the normal way. So, while it is difficult to know how to improve such procedures, they will be examined.

I strongly refute the hon. Gentleman's remarks about security matters. I refute what he said about muddle: there was none. When I came to the House on 22 December I was aware of the existence of the warning, but it was important, so soon after the disaster, to refrain from speculation about the cause—the hon. Gentleman said as much himself in a supplementary question that afternoon. —*[Interruption.]* That was the hon. Gentleman's remark —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Channon: Also, an FAA bulletin stated that it was not to be referred to without the specific approval of the FAA's director of civil aviation security. I refute the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of events and of what I said later.

As I have already said, we are reviewing the whole question of aircraft security. I reject what the hon. Gentleman said about our attitude to the Select Committee's report. My predecessor accepted the overwhelming majority of the recommendations some years ago. The hon. Gentleman referred specifically to banding machines and to a levy. On the levy, there are no financial considerations that would lead to inadequate security being allowed. Security costs can always be passed on in an appropriate way. I see no reason at this stage to consider an aviation security levy, although I would not rule it out for all time. Banding machines play a limited part in increasing security and do not make the difference that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East pretends they do.

It would have been wholly irresponsible of me at that stage to release that warning. The House in general understands that, so I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman seeks to drag up this red herring to try to divert attention from some of his more foolish remarks recently.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend agree that no praise is too high for the rescue services, the police, the fire services, the local council, the regional district council, the community workers, the Churches and countless thousands of others from voluntary organisations? My right hon. Friend may still be discussing the matter with his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, but can he give an assurance that no part of the cost from the awful

tragedy that stemmed from a terrorist bomb and which has now led to an international murder hunt will fall on the local community?

Mr. Channon: On the second part of my hon. Friend's remarks, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is pursuing with the Dumfries and Galloway regional council the matter of wider costs arising from the disaster and he will note my hon. Friend's remarks. I know that the whole House agrees with my hon. Friend's comments about the emergency services and their reaction on the occasion.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): We all admire those who were involved in the collecting and analysing of wreckage from this terrible incident. Tribute has been paid to the professional services, but I am sure that the Secretary of State will also wish to thank the volunteers from the forestry organisations, for example, and the mountain rescue teams from the south of Scotland and over the border who helped in this incident.

I want to ask a few questions about the security aspects. Can the Secretary of State confirm that, immediately after the accident, a check was made that nobody was able to book through from Frankfurt to New York, check in baggage and then leave the plane at London? Can he confirm that that possible route has been ruled out? Secondly, can he confirm that the Czechoslovakian Government are now willing to engage in methods of identifying Semtex plastic explosive, which they have not been willing to do before? Thirdly, will the Secretary of State give the House some idea of the number of false bomb warnings received each year by his Department, so that we may keep the matter in perspective?

Mr. Channon: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments. There were many volunteers at the disaster and they cannot be praised too highly. On the matter of checking baggage, I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance for which he has asked. I hope that the House will understand that on some questions I do not answer fully and that there may be good reasons for not doing so. On the question of Semtex——

Mr. Prescott: Where is the national security in that?

Mr. Channon: I dispute that. I am trying to deal with an important matter. As to the question of Semtex, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) has had a meeting with the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister today. I believe and hope that a constructive result will follow from that. I understand that a Czech team will visit this country, beginning tomorrow, so I hope that the matter will be energetically pursued.

About 215 bomb warnings are received annually and there are a large number of other warnings as well.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My right hon. Friend is right to describe aviation terrorism as an international menace. The House will be relieved to know that the matter is top of the agenda at the meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal. It is hoped that the organisation will agree on an international strategy for meeting the threat, although once measures are identified, there is the matter of their implementation. I accept my right hon. Friend's comment that there is no needed for a levy on passengers in the United Kingdom. We are a developed nation, but there are other countries that are not as developed, in which a lack of resources may result in such measures not being taken.

What is my right hon. Friend's reaction to the suggestion that there should be a $1 levy per ticket for every civil aviation passenger, which would raise about $180 million a year, which could be paid to ICAO for use internationally to ensure that measures are introduced at all airports? Security is like a chain, because it is only as strong as its weakest link. Surely our aim must be to eliminate the weak links.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has raised a very important point. Clearly, there will be discussions within ICAO about aviation terrorism in the next few weeks—indeed, such discussions have already begun. I shall consider my hon. Friend's remarks and whether it would be appropriate for us to raise that question with ICAO. I should like to examine in detail the implication of my hon. Friend's proposal.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) referred to the Select Committee on Transport report on airport security, which was published in October 1986. It made 21 recommendations, 18 of which were accepted by the Government. Can the Secretary of State tell us exactly how many of the recommendations have been implemented fully since then and what monitoring has taken place to ensure that they remain fully implemented?

Will the Secretary of State now do as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East demanded and introduce the immediate banding of all hold luggage, which was the Committee's first recommendation and which was rejected by the Department of Transport in November 1986? Does he accept that it was nothing short of criminal not to pass on notice of the bomb warning to the appropriate people at Heathrow airport?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension on his last point. As I have said already, when assessments are made and it is decided that steps need to be taken, the warning is, of course, passed on. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was under a misapprehension when he said that the enhanced American measures already in force were not known to the British Airports Authority. Of course they have been known for some years and I have discussed them myself with the BAA. There is a misunderstanding about that.

I am grateful that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), unlike some other hon. Members, confirmed that the Government accepted the overwhelming majority of the Select Committee's recommendations two years ago. [HON. MEMBERS: "What have you done?"] The overwhelming number of those 21 recommendations have been accepted and implemented. The hon. Gentleman referred to the recommendation about banding. My predecessor and the Department concluded that the recommendation on banding would not produce significant security benefits. If the hon. Gentleman or the Select Committee wishes to pursue the matter further we shall re-examine it. However, it was my view and that of my predecessor that that recommendation would produce few security benefits.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): May I first congratulate my right hon. Friend on his strenuous efforts to keep us informed and on taking such an interest in this dreadful tragedy? The Opposition criticisms of his behaviour are totally unacceptable. Conservative Members believe that he has done an excellent job, and should be praised for that.

I want to ask my right hon. Friend whether he is concerned—as I am—about the way in which security is handled at Heathrow. There are too many people involved and no one person has the responsibility to make decisions. The British Airports Authority, the airlines, the baggage handlers, Customs officers and immigration officers are all involved, but no one has the final responsibility for security. It is no use having an airport committee that sits down and discusses the matter. I suggested to the Select Committee—this was also the view of the chief constables—that responsibility for security at airports, especially Heathrow in my constituency, should be with the police. I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider that possibility, so that we know where the buck stops.

Finally, is my right hon. Friend aware that many people travelling through Heathrow and other airports would be prepared to wait much longer if the baggage that leaves them when they check in was thoroughly checked on airside? Many of us know that that does not happen at present, and would like the opportunity to be at the airport much earlier—perhaps two or three hours earlier—and of knowing that the baggage would be checked once it had gone past the check-in desk.

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly bear that in mind, and I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said in his earlier remarks. I have no evidence at present that leads me to believe that security requirements laid down at London's airports are not carried out efficiently. I know of my hon. Friend's concern, however, and I shall examine all that he has said—and the similar points made by other of my hon. Friends—and get in touch with him.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the most urgently needed requirements is the establishment at all airports of explosive-detecting devices, and that the drive for improved security should not take place only at international airports? I do not wish to be alarmist, but if Americans are thought to be the prime target—that, apparently, is how the right hon. Gentleman's mind is working—will he take account of the large number of Americans resident in the north-east of Scotland who use Aberdeen airport? Finally, will he give the House an assurance that cost will not inhibit increases in security wherever necessary?

Mr. Channon: Of course we want as high a level of security as we can reasonably expect, and we must have security comensurate with the level of threat that exists at any particular moment. I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. We are carrying out research into new technology: at present we have a programme with the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence researching several promising new techniques for detecting explosives and weapons. I want to speed that up as soon as possible, and I am discussing the matter with my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that while security standards at British airports, and at Heathrow in particular, have been very good, there must always be room for improvement? Does he agree that although, in the aftermath of a tragedy such as Lockerbie, passengers say—no doubt genuinely—that they will accept any extra cost or delay, sadly, once the months have passed, complaints about both costs and delays begin to grow, and there is pressure for a reduction in security standards in the interests of expediting the flow of passengers?

Finally, does my right hon. Friend agree that to give publicity to any, or very many, of the warnings received by airports, airlines, and possibly my right hon. Friend's Department, would undermine security? Would it not provide an incentive for more hoaxers and mischief-makers to put out more false warnings, thereby confusing the security services and, indeed, causing them to disregard even warnings that appear genuine?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with all these points, particularly my right hon. Friend's last and extremely important point about the treatment of bomb warnings —and any other sort of warning. As my right hon. Friend said, there is always scope for further improvement in security, and I shall keep that under continuous review.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Obviously members of the nationalist parties represented in the House have already associated themselves with the expressions of sympathy and the rightful tributes to the rescue services at Lockerbie, and we extend them to those involved in yesterday's tragedy.

May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the statement made by the Secretary of State for Energy in the wake of the Piper Alpha disaster? He made it clear then that no cost would be spared to preserve the lives of those who work in the North sea. May we have a similar assurance of the Government's readiness to spend money on airport security? Will the right hon. Gentleman look particularly at the problem of overcrowding at Heathrow, which is surely a major problem in itself for the security services because of the volume of traffic there? Is there not perhaps an argument for decentralising some flights to regional airports elsewhere, thus making it possible to ensure that security standards are observed and fully met?

I am delighted at what the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) has said. Could we not have a full debate on security at airports, perhaps in a few months, when we are a bit more removed from the immediacy of the tragedy and our awareness of the implications of our remarks for the families involved?

Mr. Channon: I agree with a great deal of what the hon. Lady says. Her last point, however, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who will no doubt wish to consider it. I am sure that the hon. Lady is right in saying that we should not debate the matter for a little while, until we see how the situation develops.

We must of course ensure that we have adequate security commensurate with the threat, and that must be achieved whatever the cost. The hon. Lady asked about overcrowding: naturally, as she has been one of the first to point out, we want to see as much traffic as possible—traffic of all kinds—going through regional airports. There are some encouraging trends: the proportion of traffic being borne by regional airports is going up and will, I think, continue to do so. Inevitably, however, many

millions of people will continue to want to travel through London's various airports. Nevertheless, I shall bear all the hon. Lady's points in mind.

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): Both my wife and I were born and brought up in Lockerbie and went to school there, and my mother still lives there. My hon. Friend referred to the assistance that the Government have already given to the town, and I welcome that very warmly. Can he give an assurance, however, that the rebuilding work will be undertaken with the maximum possible speed? The sooner that it is completed, the sooner people in the town will have a chance to recover from the trauma of 21 December.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend, with his local knowledge, is right to raise that question. I understand that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland has already had talks with the local authorities about that and other relevant matters, and I shall ensure that he reads what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The right hon. Gentleman's explanation about the bomb scare sounds most unconvincing. It is as if something were being hidden from the House of Commons. Can he explain why, within half an hour of making a statement in Parliament in which he said that he was not willing to speculate on what had happened, he went on BBC radio and told 52 million people that there had been a bomb scare? Why was he willing to say that to 52 million people outside a BBC studio, but not willing to say it to Parliament? Could it be that he knew then that he was on the defensive, and that mistakes had been made? Was he beginning this whole stupid cover-up?

Mr. Channon: I have had debates with the hon. Gentleman in the past and he has not taken this line. He has entirely misunderstood the position. I have already explained, I think to the satisfaction of most of the House, why I did not refer in the House to the warning. If hon. Members are now criticising what I said subsequently on the radio, I must ask them to read the transcripts.

Mr. Bill Walker: (Tayside, North): This and the previous statement clearly show the importance of the accident investigation branch to the safety, and the future safety, of air travellers. Air travel has public confidence, which is why so many people use it. It is important for us in the House not to give the impression that some aspects are less favourable today than they were. In fact, air travel is much safer now, because of the activities of the accident investigation branch.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the sadnesses on all these occasions is that we hear complaints, observations and views that bear no relation to the investigation branch's reports when they come out? All those connected with aviation—particularly, at present, those who work for British Midland Airways—who believe in the industry acknowledge that only when the accident investigation report has been prepared, presented and gone into fully, and it is understood why the accident occurred, can action be taken to prevent its recurrence. They accept, as everyone who travels should, that there is no way of removing the risk of terrorism or air accidents by 100 per cent. The only way to do that is stop flying, which is not an option that is available today.

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with both my hon. Friend's points, particularly his tribute to the air accident investigation branch, which has been carrying out difficult work with extreme skill and thoroughness. I also agree with his point about the unhelpful nature of speculation in cases of this kind before all the facts are known, and I shall not indulge in that.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Does the Minister agree that a potential major loophole in airport security, which has been exploited by drug barons in the past, is the quality of ground staff—baggage handlers and catering and cleaning staff? Therefore, will he consider improving vetting for those in such jobs who can pass airside, often with little scrutiny, and ensure that they are searched regularly to ascertain that they are not sleepers for terrorist groups, who could be activated as and when those terrorist groups wish?

Mr. Channon: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not go into details on that point, but I shall take very much to heart what he says.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My right hon. Friend is aware that I lost a young family of four from my constituency and the people who know them grieve for them because they were great contributors to the local community. Local police, not only those at the site of the accident, often have duties to perform in these circumstances such as notifying next of kin and looking after property, and I pay tribute to them. I also have a constituent who tragically lost his adult son in the crash.

Without at all wishing to be associated with the unworthy comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), may I say that the rumour that there was a warning before the crash circulated unchecked for several days after it at a time of maximum grief. That has caused increased distress because it appears that some people had had notice of the warnings while others had not. Is there anything that my right hon. Friend can do in such circumstances, for example in the way that sometimes happens in serious kidnapping cases, to reach an agreement that such information should not be prematurely released to the public?

My right hon. Friend was right not to put forward that information at the beginning because it could have increased the speculation, but, nevertheless, it reached the public domain and I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend could review the activities of his Department in such circumstances and discuss with the police and international authorities whether information that may cause unnecessary grief could be withheld from the public.

Mr. Channon: I take note of what my hon. Friend says. He was in touch with me before Christmas about the tragic events affecting his constituents. The United States Government, who operate in a slightly different way from us, told some of its diplomats about the warning. As I said in my original statement, the American and Finnish authorities said that the warning that they saw had little credibility. I am sure that the Americans are now reviewing their handling of such matters and I take note of what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I too want to express my gratitude to the emergency services who undertook work at Lockerbie with great professionalism and courage. They included the rescue squadron service

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

based at RAF Valley in my constituency. Most of its helicopters took part in the rescue work at Lockerbie. I am sure that the Secretary of State will acknowledge the tremendous work done by rescue service squadrons, not only from RAF Valley but from elswhere in the United Kingdom.

Will the Secretary of State note the anxiety of some hon. Members about the increased use of private security firms, not only at airports but at seaports? Will he acknowledge that some police authorities are worried about the inadequate professional training in those firms and believe that we should ensure that the highest level of competence in security obtains at airports and seaports?

Mr. Channon: I am not sure that I necessarily agree with the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, but that is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to his attention. However, I can certainly agree with his tribute to the rescue services. That was entirely right and I am glad that he has drawn that to the attention of the House.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I think that I speak for many outside the House as well as those on the Conservative Benches when I deplore attempts to make political capital out of this appalling incident. If I may correct the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), it was not the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) but I who made the suggestion, following the Air India disaster, with which the Committee agreed.

Will my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of the Select Committee were satisfied that the Government's acceptance of the vast majority of our recommendations was reasonable, given the circumstances and the security record of the major British airports at that time? Will he also reflect on the fact that the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) was not a recommendation of the Select Committee? It was merely one of the points that we considered and felt was not right. But, in view of what my hon. Friend has said, will my right hon. Friend accept that the Select Committee may want to reconsider some of the proposals that we made then that were not taken up? May I have his assurance that if the Select Committee does that he will give the matters his most urgent consideration?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I naturally would do that. If the Select Committee wants to return to the subject I shall have no conceivable objection and I shall consider carefully any recommendations that it makes. The point that I was trying to make, which I think has been confirmed by my hon. Friend and by the Chairman of the Select Committee, was that the large majority of the recommendations were accepted by the Government. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the Government's reasonableness in doing that. I agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's remarks, that it is most unpleasant when people try to make political capital out of a national tragedy.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Putting on one side for a moment what the Secretary of State referred to as a misunderstanding about security finance, let me ask specifically whether the bulletin that he received from the American authorities precluded his Department from disseminating the information to the authorities at Heathrow without the Americans' permission,,. If so, did he seek the Americans' permission or was the decision taken in his Department not to pass on the specific details in the bulletin—not the enhanced security situation—to Heathrow?

Further, is it common knowledge in his Department, or does it require his Department's approval, that aircraft using British airspace have their nooks and crannies stuffed full of spent uranium?

Mr. Channon: Is the hon. Gentleman referring to the plane crash at Lockerbie?

Mr. Rooker: Yes.

Mr. Channon: There have been reports of small amounts of spent uranium in the tail of that plane. I understand that that is normal and I am told that there is no danger whatever. That point has already been drawn to my attention.

The hon. Gentleman has tabled a number of parliamentary questions on the issue raised in the first part of his question, which I shall be answering. I am not sure whether I shall be giving him all the information that he wants, but if I do not he will understand that I am not prepared to go further than my earlier remarks about warnings being subject to the assessment process. I hope that the House will be pleased about the clear message received from the American and Finnish authorities that they thought the warnings had little credibility.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Does my right hon. Friend recall that after the Clapham incident I had to make the rather unpleasant accusation that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was trying to make party politics out of a personal tragedy?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman is being vindictive again.

Mr. Adley: I am not being vindictive.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that after Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Clapham and Lockerbie the hon. Gentleman sought to hold my right hon. Friend personally responsible for what happened? Is my right hon. Friend aware that that attitude will be utterly deplored by most normal people in Britain? Is my right hon. Friend aware that he has the full confidence of Conservative Members as a result of the way in which he has handled that appalling series of tragedies, when he has done everything that he can to get to the bottom of them and to help people in their hour of need?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The country will be disappointed with the unsatisfactory and evasive answer that the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). It confirms the Opposition's view that the Government's policies put the value of money much higher than the value of human life. I shall give the Secretary of State one more chance to come to the Dispatch Box and commit his Department to writing to the Select Committee to say

exactly how many of its suggestions have been implemented as a result of its report on airport security about three years ago.

Mr. Channon: I have already told the House that the overwhelming majority of the Select Committee's recommendations have been accepted. If the Select Committee wants to pursue the matter further, that is its privilege, and we shall be pleased to answer any questions it puts to us. I shall be meeting the Select Committee tomorrow and I am at its disposal on any day, at any time on any subject. I shall not duck my responsibilities.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. Friend say whether it was necessary for the bomb to be placed in a particular part of the baggage hold for it to do its dreadful work? If that is the case, is he satisfied that those who loaded the aircraft at London and Frankfurt were properly security vetted? Has any organisation come forward to claim this ghastly crime, since terrorists usually like to let the world know of their successes?

Mr. Channon: A number of organisations have claimed this appalling crime. That was some time ago, as I understand it, but I will have to check that. However, it is extremely difficult to know how much credence can be placed on their claims. I will not answer the first part of my hon. Friend's question at this stage of the investigation. I may be able to give him a proper answer when the investigation has progressed further.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Is it correct to conclude from all that has been said today that the loophole that allowed somebody to place a bomb on the flight has not yet been discovered and closed, but still exists to be used again?

Mr. Channon: No. The hon. Gentleman has not understood the situation. The investigation is not complete, so we do not as yet know where the bomb was placed on board. Therefore, it is impossible to say whether the loophole—if there was one—has been closed, since we have not yet identified it. My investigators and the police, who are in charge of the criminal investigation, are urgently and energetically investigating that. I gave the House new information today that narrows down the location of the bomb to one cargo and a baggage hold just forward of the wing.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The evil of the people who perpetrated the act is almost beyond understanding. Unfortunately they are also resourceful and if we close the door now they may well find another one. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that all Governments are searching for the perpetrators of this crime, and if any are not, is he considering sanctions against them?

Mr. Channon: It would be going too far to say that I am satisfied that all Governments are taking the necessary steps. I am consulting my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Foreign Office to find out what further steps we should take internationally, and we shall pursue them vigorously. It is exceedingly important that all Governments should take steps to root out international terrorism of this sort.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I impress upon the Secretary of State the importance of his previous response. Earlier today he called upon countries

"to condemn not only the despicable murderers themselves but any country which has supplied them, trained them, housed them or encouraged them."

We have heard that sort of statement time and time again but when statements are made saying that perpetrators should be punished, we hear that we should not have an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. I remind the Secretary of State and the House that that is a limitation on personal revenge but it is the responsibility of Governments to protect their citizens.

Is the Secretary of State satisfied that, despite the high level of security—for example, at Heathrow—we have not developed a mechanical approach to security? For example, I saw a former distinguished Governor of Northern Ireland being searched because he happened to be the one in five who was due to be stopped. In another incident since the Lockerbie disaster, it took one hour before the passengers on a plane with a suspected bomb or other problem could disembark and identify their baggage. One can only guess that if a bomb had been on the plane it would have exploded before the passengers had disembarked.

I urge the Secretary of State not to manifest the complacency I detected, especially in his response to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) when he was pressed about the provision of compensation. Over two years ago in the House I had a similar assurance regarding innocent people in Belfast and they are still awaiting their compensation as the Department keeps fighting them in the courts.

Mr. Channon: I am sorry to hear that. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I am not complacent about the disaster. Anyone who had had to make the statements I have had to make in the past few weeks would long since have stopped being complacent about anything. I cannot say that one is ever perfectly satisfied about security. We shall attempt to have security commensurate with the appropriate level of threat that may exist at any time.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the reaction to other Governments who may have been less than co-operative, or perhaps malevolent. It is too soon to come to any conclusion about that, because the investigation is not complete and the identity of the perpetrators of the foul act is not yet clear. We are doing our utmost to try to find out.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Because part of Heathrow airport is in my constituency I have made a detailed study of all the changes announced recently. Is my right hon. Friend aware that at least one of the six changes announced by the Federal Aviation Administration recently—the X-raying of all hold baggage—is incapable of being implemented at Heathrow or virtually any other major international airport in Europe or America?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says. I do not want to go into detail, but we are discussing that, together with other matters, with the FAA.

BILLS PRESENTED

Mr. Speaker: Before I call hon. Members to present their Bills I should draw attention to an error in the title of the second Bill, which is to be presented by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie). The age referred to in the title should be 18, not 16 and the Bill will be presented in its correct form.

Riders of Equine Animals (Wearing of Protective Headgear)

Mr. Harry Greenway, supported by Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. Stuart Randall, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Mr. A. E. P. Duffy, Mr. Derek Conway, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. John Carlisle and Mr. Terence L. Higgins presented a Bill to make provision for the wearing of protective headgear by riders of equine animals; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed. [Bill 34.]

Gaming Machines (Prohibition on Use by Persons Under Eighteen)

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, supported by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. John Hughes, Dr. John Reid, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Allen Adams, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Bob McTaggart, Mr. Robert Litherland and Mr. Stanley Orme presented a Bill to prohibit the use of gaming machines in cafés, small shops, amusement arcades, snack bars, fairgrounds and other places by persons under the age of eighteen: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed. [Bill 35.]

Coalmining Subsidence (Damage, Arbitration, Prevention and Public Awareness)

Mr. Alan Meale supported by Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr Eric Illsley, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. John Prescott, Mr. Alex Eadie and Mr. George J. Buckley presented a Bill to establish the rights of owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence resulting from the working and getting of coal or of coal and other minerals worked therewith, to full repair or equitable compensation of their properties; to establish an independent arbitration procedure to resolve any disputes that may arise out of such damage or any matters relating thereto; to require any public body or organisation involved in the working or getting of coal and other minerals to take steps to prevent subsidence damage and to promote public awareness of workings which might give rise to such damage: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 10 February and to be printed. [Bill 36.]

Human Rights

Mr. Graham Allen supported by Mr. Denis Healey, Mr. David Steel, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Sir Antony Buck, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Ernie Ross, Ms. Joan Walley, Mr. Richard Caborn, Mr. Jonathan Aitken and Mr. Andrew F. Bennett presented a Bill to provide protection in the courts of the United Kingdom for the rights and freedoms specified in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to which the United Kingdom is a party: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 January and to be printed. [Bill 37.]

Misuse of Drugs

Mr. Menzies Campbell presented a Bill to extend the coverage of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to include certain drugs which have been misused for the purpose of improving performance in sport: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 March and to be printed. [Bill 39.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House I shall put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Electricity and Pipe-line Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Harbours Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) (No. 2) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Point of Order

5 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether you might exercise discretion in favour of Members who wish to table questions. You will have noticed today that the Secretary of State for Transport, when replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), introduced a blocking statement which would have the effect of preventing further questions being asked in relation to a part of his statement. If I recall correctly, my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr questioned the right hon. Gentleman about what happened during the course of the argument about the security scare.

May we, in view of what appears in *Hansard* at column 605 for 22 December last, ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider whether you might be willing to accept questions and not treat that blocking statement as valid, remembering that the Secretary of State gave an assurance to the House on that earlier occasion, when he said:

"there can be no constraint. We must get at the truth. I hope, however, that it may be possible at an earlier stage to give the House and the public more information if there are immediate lessons to be learnt".—[*Official Report*, Thursday 22 December, 1988; Vol. 144, c. 605.]

Throughout his statement on 22 December the right hon. Gentleman gave repeated assurances that all the information would be made available to the House, and he did that again today. I am concerned lest the words he used —I think the record will show that he said, in effect, "I have nothing further to add to the statement that I made earlier in my opening remarks"—may prevent hon. Members from tabling questions.

Mr. Speaker: I will look carefully at the record in *Hansard* and consider what the hon. Member has said.

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Order for Second reading read.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the late start to this debate and the number of hon. Gentlemen who wish to take part in it, I propose to limit speeches for Back Benchers between the hours of 7 and 9 o'clock to 10 minutes.

5.2 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is not a long Bill, but it is no less important for that. I believe that it is our duty as a Government to keep the social security system under review, to adapt it to meet the changing needs and circumstances of the 1980s and to look ahead to the challenges of the 1990s. The world clearly does not stand still, and social security cannot do so either.

It is simply not good enough unthinkingly to retain arrangements which were adequate for the problems of the 1960s, or even less—as some Labour Members seem to wish to do—to cling to the shibboleths of the 1930s. This Government have the will to challenge those outdated attitudes and to advance social policy in this country. The Bill seeks to achieve just that.

In no area has the change in Britain over the last few years been more marked than in the labour market. New jobs in the new industries and services—the jobs of the future—are being created in growing numbers; employment prospects have been transformed; and unemployment, as a consequence, is falling dramatically in all parts of the country—the longest and most sustained fall since records began.

By introducing family credit earlier this year, the Government took a huge step towards removing perverse incentives for the parents of children either to remain in the shrinking pool of the unemployed or, once in work, to limit their efforts to do better. Yet month after month, firms report vacancies that they are finding difficult to fill. There are about 700,000 jobs on offer in a typical month, and these are not just jobs for those with specialist skills. Many of them need no special training.

Each and every one of those vacancies is an opportunity for an unemployed person to gain the self-respect and independence that comes from supporting themselves and their family by their own efforts. It is clearly, therefore, the duty of the Government to help them to realise that potential, not only for their own sake but for the good of the country as a whole. That is the imperative behind the major changes to unemployment benefit that the Bill will introduce.

There have always been conditions attached to receiving unemployment benefit. Most Members will agree that that is only proper. Unemployment benefit is for those who want to work, but who are temporarily unable to find a job. But how can one hope to find work without making any effort to look for it?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Moore: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will permit me to continue for a while longer. I am conscious of the comments made by Mr. Speaker about the time available for this debate, but I shall give way shortly if the matter is pressing.

It is not right for those who are claiming benefits because of unemployment to receive them without doing everything reasonable to find work. I believe that most people would support that view. Indeed, many will be surprised, if not horrified, to learn that there is no such requirement in the legislation already. Let me make it quite clear that these powers do not exist at the moment. Claimants can currently argue that by attendance at a job centre and claiming benefit every two weeks, they have done all they need to satisfy the present requirements.

The vast majority of claimants—I stress this—do take the initiative in looking for work, but there is ample evidence that this is no longer true for everyone. As hon. Members will be aware, the 1987 labour force survey showed that 730,000 benefit claimants were not taking active steps to seek work and that no fewer than 360,000 claimants did not even pretend to want a proper job of work at all.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister is bragging about the number of people he is helping with income support. Will he now admit to the number of people he has robbed of money from the point of view of income support? *[Interruption.]* I wonder why the Minister for Social Security, the new junior Minister, seems to be bawling his head off over this.

Is the Secretary of State aware of the number of constituents who come to my surgery to complain about this matter? One of them told me last Saturday that he and his wife had lost £14 a week. Let us hear about cases such as that and about the people the Government have robbed of money.

Mr. Moore: I shall endeavour to continue to illustrate what the Government are introducing in the Bill. I shall continue to address my remarks to the key elements of the Bill concerning the 700,000 unfilled jobs about which I was speaking, some 140,000 of which are in London.

A report about the London labour market compiled in the summer of last year—I am sure that, with their diligence, Opposition Members will have studied it with great care—showed that employers reported receiving job applications from long-term unemployed people for only about one fifth of recent vacancies. Over 25 per cent. of the claimants interviewed had not looked for work in the previous week, and of those, nearly half had not looked for work in the previous four weeks, and 5 per cent. had never looked for work at all. This is a sad and wholly unacceptable picture. The Government are determined to ensure that unemployment benefits are paid only to those who are genuinely unemployed.

In the course of 1988, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment took a number of steps to ensure that people claiming unemployment benefit were satisfying the current requirement to be available for work. In particular, unemployed people are now called to a restart interview every six months for as long as they remain out of work. As part of that interview, they now have to complete a questionnaire which is designed to establish that they are still available for work. Despite the existing powers, it was clear from these initiatives that a number of claimants are simply not looking for work.

Mr. Tony Banks: I appreciate that the Minister is trying to prove to the House that unemployed people are largely workshy and shiftless—*[Interruption.]* Whatever Conservative Members may think, that is precisely what it sounds like to the Opposition. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that a number of things militate against people taking jobs in London? First, many of them are low-paid jobs. Secondly, accommodation is not available because of the cuts in council house building and the decreases in housing benefit. Thirdly, fares in London have just gone up by 12 per cent. He must understand that all those factors militate against people going to find those jobs that are available.

Mr. Moore: If the hon. Gentleman had studied the report to which I was referring, he would not have made such an absurd attempt to reinvent the GLC. It is quite wrong, as I was saying, that these people should continue to be supported at the expense of working people paying contributions and taxes.

Nor is it doing any service to claimants or their families to allow them to drop out of the world of work when so many vacancies are available. Therefore, clauses 7 and 10 of the Bill will ensure that benefit claimants must show that they are seeking work actively. What exactly they have to do will depend obviously on circumstances such as the local job market and the claimant's capabilities.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): *rose*——

Mr. Moore: Perhaps the hon. Lady will permit me to continue for a little longer.

Employment service staff will give advice and question claimants periodically. They may suggest alternative or additional courses of action. If there is doubt about whether a claimant is doing all he can, the independent adjudication officer will decide whether benefit is to continue. But the local staff in employment service offices will have the powers that they need, following the passage of the Bill, to help those people into work.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend make it quite clear, as we have had an intervention from the Opposition, that the main thrust of Labour party policy on this subject seems to be that those who could work and are not prepared to work should receive hard-earned taxpayers' money to support them in their idleness?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend knows that he and the Government are far more closely in touch with the general public on this matter. The general public are conscious of the opportunities that are available. However, I must continue

The second major element of my proposals for unemployment benefit ensures that claimants cannot continue indefinitely pricing themselves out of any job they might realistically be expected to get. It is of course quite right that newly unemployed people should be able to concentrate their efforts on finding employment in their usual occupations and at wages similar to the ones they have been used to receiving, but it would be quite wrong for unemployed people to be able to continue to restrict their search to jobs that are beyond the rates of pay that

they can realistically now command. Clause 9 will therefore make provision for a permitted period during which unemployed persons can seek jobs of a kind and in a wage range familiar to them.

The length of the permitted period will be decided on an individual basis but would depend on the skills of the individual and the sort of employment available locally. But we do not think it right that it should extend beyond a maximum of 13 weeks.

But even after the permitted period we have no intention of forcing people, on pain of losing benefit, to accept jobs which are genuinely unsuitable. "Good cause" for declining a job is well set out in case law, as hon. Members know. It covers factors such as health, family circumstances, religious beliefs, travelling difficulties, and so on.

Let me stress again that the only significant change that the Bill will make to reasons for refusing jobs which fall under the general heading of "good cause" will be to limit the period for which the wages on offer can be a factor. It will remove the temptation for unemployed people to continue indefinitely to delude themselves about the wages that they can command.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): One of the principal employment problems for some people is the fact that temporary jobs are on offer. Those jobs are perfectly good, and well paid, but they are temporary from the beginning, lasting perhaps for three months or six months. Under the existing law, if someone takes such a job, at the end of the temporary period that person would again be newly unemployed and therefore would lose many of the benefits that had been accumulated previously. Is care being taken to ensure that people will not be forced to take temporary jobs when at the end of the temporary job they will be in a worse position?

Mr. Moore: I am glad that my hon. Friend raised that point, given his experience of such matters. I was going on to say that clause 9 also introduces a further measure to encourage unemployed people to broaden their job search and their efforts to find work. That is a very similar point to that raised by my hon. Friend and I am sure that it will be welcomed in all parts of the House.

As my hon. Friend said, after a lengthy period of unemployment, a person may often be unsure of his capability. Taking up any employment may well constitute something of a risk. He may fear to try an unfamiliar job because, as my hon. Friend said, if he takes a job which simply does not work out and leaves voluntarily he may be disqualified from unemployment benefit. We therefore intend that anyone who has been out of work for at least 12 months can be sure that he can leave a job voluntarily without fear of disqualification, provided he has given the job a fair trial.

That concession will apply not only to those who have been signing on for 12 months but to those who, for instance, have been out of work for the same period due to sickness.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Moore: I shall complete my point. Despite attempts to get me to give way, I shall try to proceed a little.

To counter abuse, the concession will apply only once in any 12-month period, and only to people leaving a job after a decent trial of six weeks or more, but not to anyone leaving after 12 weeks once they have had more than ample opportunity to realise that the job was not right for them.

Overall, these measures are expected to reduced the roll of the unemployed by as many as 50,000. That is entirely to be welcomed. Claimants stand to gain absolutely nothing from unemployment when there are jobs as an alternative.

The Bill will also be breaking important new ground in other areas.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Moore: It is our aim to bring about equal treatment between men and women——

Ms. Short: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Secretary of State has made it clear to the occupant of the Chair and to the House that he is not prepared to give way for the present.

Mr. Moore: I have given way more times than most Opposition Front Bench spokesmen—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the rabble on the Opposition Benches would occasionally listen. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker rightly drew our attention to the limited time. I shall continue, if I may.

It is our aim to bring about equal treatment between men and women in social security and occupational pensions. Clause 19 takes a further important step in this direction by tackling discrimination in occupational schemes. They will no longer be able to deny access to occupational pensions or pay lower benefits on the basis of sex.

Our Community colleagues are dealing with such discrimination across Europe as a whole. The measures in the Bill therefore also implement the EC directive on the issue. The legislation will apply to schemes from 1 January 1993. Broadly it will override any difference of treatment in occupational pension schemes, whether that difference relates to entitlement to membership, to the contributions that members and employers pay, or to the benefits members receive. There are, however, special safeguards for those absent from work for maternity or for family reasons.

Schemes will also be able to make changes to come into line with the requirements before the overriding provision takes effect. We are introducing powers to enable the Occupational Pensions Board to authorise such modifications specifically to achieve that.

Many schemes still have different pension ages for men and women. The equal treatment directive contains a derogation which excepts such differences from its scope. We intend to take advantage of that in our own legislation, but the scope of the derogation has only recently been clarified following responses to a consultation paper we issued in the summer. We will therefore bring forward a suitable amendment during the passage of the Bill to take advantage of the derogation in the light of that advice.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Will the amendment deal with the problem faced by schemes which already have a common retirement age of 60 for both men and women

[Mr. John Watts]

and which currently pay a higher rate of benefit to men for the five years before they become entitled to state retirement pension, and reduce it to the same level as women thereafter? As I understand it, under the Bill as drafted that would be precluded. That seems to be a kick in the teeth for companies with schemes that have not discriminated on grounds of sex or age for many years.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is referring to the Mars case, as I recall from past discussion with him. The Bill should ensure that the exception covers all schemes, but we are discussing the matter. As I said earlier, that is why I have drawn the attention of the official Opposition to the particular point that definition as to the breadth of the derogation is a slightly complex legal matter. That is why I apologise again for having to table an amendment in Committee that brings the derogation forward. I know that it will be more helpful if we get it right.

A short but important clause in the Bill, clause 2, abolishes from April next year the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund. When the national insurance fund was established in 1948, it was funded on Beveridge's "tripartite principle", roughly equally by employees' contributions, employers' contributions and general taxation—the Treasury supplement. At the time, that subsidy from taxation was essential. Contributions were flat rate and could have covered the contributory benefits and pensions met from the only national insurance fund if they were set at rates too high for a substantial number of people to afford. Since 1975, contributions have no longer been flat rate, but are levied as a proportion of earnings.

The tripartite principle is already effectively a dead letter. The rationale behind it has gone, and the supplement has been shrinking steadily as a proportion of the fund's income from about one third in 1948. It now stands at only 5 per cent. We consider that there is now no need for it at all. The £26 billion of expenditure from the fund is fully covered by contributory income, and the abolition of the supplement will have absolutely no effect on that expenditure.

The Bill also addresses another feature of the benefit system which dates back to 1948. When someone is injured, for example in an accident, he may become entitled to social security benefits. But if he can establish that some other party was liable, he may also receive compensation through the legal system for those identical injuries. But how should each form of payment take account of the other?

The courts have ruled repeatedly in recent years—the latest occasion being in November last year—that an injured person should not get this windfall from double payments, once in compensation and again in benefits. What that means at present is that payments of a range of benefits simply and directly reduce the amount of compensation to be paid to injured people by defendants. The injured person gains nothing from this arrangement, but ordinary people paying taxes and contributions are effectively subsidising defendants and their insurers.

There are a number of other benefits—those listed in the Law Reform (Personal Injuries) Act 1948—for which different arrangements were made. The 1948 Act made a compromise based on the assumption that, because of the industrial injuries scheme not many people would claim damages. In those cases, compensation is reduced by 50 per cent. of the value of the benefits to be paid by the state over five years. So in those cases too, the taxpayer or contributor is effectively subsidising defendants and their insurers. The law is manifestly ripe for review.

The National Audit Office, endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee, highlighted the inconsistency of this mixture of 50 and 100 per cent. offsets. It also drew attention to the overwhelming objection to these offsets. In the words of the report, under the present system

"the wrongdoer can have the cost of his negligence partly or fully met by public funds".

In seeking to reform the law, we have adopted two principles, both endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee. The first is that accident victims should not be compensated twice. The second is that the party responsible for the accident should not be able to escape part of that liability at the expense of the taxpayer. That cannot be right. It could also undermine incentives to improved safety standards.

Clause 18 provides the framework for a straightforward scheme. The value of benefits paid as a result of an injury up to the point of the legal settlement will be deducted from the compensation which is due for the same injuries. That sum will then be paid to the Department. If, for example, £5,000 compensation is agreed or awarded and the injured person has already received £1,000 in benefits for his injury, he will be paid £4,000, and the other £1,000 compensation will be paid to my Department. Further, hon. Members will wish to note that the amount recovered from defendants will not include any sums in respect of benefit payments made after the date of the settlement of the claim and that recoveries will be made only in the case of compensation payments above a certain level—possibly £1,500.

I emphasise that benefit entitlement is not affected in any case. Nevertheless, recoveries to the taxpayer from compensation paid by those liable for personal injuries is estimated to be about £55 million a year.

The Bill contains other modest but useful amendments clarifying and consolidating existing legislation and making it more relevant to today's circumstances. Clause 4 brings social security legislation more into line with family law by extending the liability of non-custodial parents to maintain children in full-time education up to the age of 19.

Clause 21 reorganises the numbers and functions of war pensions committees, which have remained broadly unchanged since 1921.

The Bill strengthens the link to recent work in the test for requalifying for unemployment benefit in clause 8 and takes account of the mushrooming of personal pensions in the abatement of unemployment benefit which operates for other occupational pensioners aged 55 and over in clause 6. It also introduces in clauses 1, 3, 11 to 17, 20 and 22 to 29 other, largely technical, amendments relating in particular to national insurance contributions and to housing benefit.

Mr. Janman: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Moore: Yes.

Mr. Janman: My right hon. Friend has listed what the Bill does, but one thing that the Bill does not do is get rid of the loophole whereby a person can continue to receive benefit because he has turned down a vacancy that has

arisen as a result of an industrial dispute. Why has my right hon. Friend decided not to close that loophole? Will he consider closing it in Committee?

Mr. Moore: As my hon. Friend noticed, the Government have specifically not included that point, because we do not agree with the view that my hon. Friend is expressing. Obviously, my hon. Friend can table a new clause, which we can debate.

Ms. Short: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moore: Of course.

Ms. Short: I am grateful. I shall take the right hon. Gentleman back a bit, because I tried to intervene earlier. The Secretary of State relies on a study of the London labour market of which perhaps he is giving a distorted impression, but it relates only to the London labour market. The Secretary of State must be aware that, if one analyses vacancies across the country, one sees that there are far fewer vacancies for unemployed people in the rest of the country than in the London area.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that whether people will count as actively seeking work will depend on the state of the local labour market. I want to ask him most seriously what distinction he will make in an area of high unemployment with few vacancies. Will he spell that out, because it is causing enormous worries across the country and the right hon. Gentleman owes us an explanation?

Mr. Moore: I wish that I had given way to the hon. Lady before.

Mr. Tony Banks: So do we.

Mr. Moore: One reason that I did not do so was the character of the preceding intervention.

I draw the hon. Lady's attention to the fact that, if she had listened carefully to me, she would know that I did not start by drawing attention to the survey "The London Labour Market", although it was a factor. I drew attention to the 1987 labour force survey, which was a national survey. However, the hon. Lady is right to say that different areas of the country have different employment opportunities.

Clearly, as a consequence, the system and the ways in which the system operates must be handled differently. The adjudicating officer—and the clerks in the unemployment benefit offices—will be given the opportunity to have powers consequential upon all the other "good causes". These are already well established in case law. One factor will be the character of the job opportunities in the local area. Therefore, I can reassure the hon. Lady on that point. Simply because I was quoting some of the most recent data in London should not lead the hon. Lady to concern herself that all judgments will be on the same basis. They cannot be, because they must vary depending on the character and the needs of the area.

To return to what I was saying, clause 5 also carries out the intention I announced in my uprating statement to introduce legislation to extend the upper age limit for payment of mobility allowance from 75 to 80. This is an interim measure until we have the opportunity to give full consideration to the large volume of information which has been collected during the surveys carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

We are well aware of the important part mobility allowance plays in improving the quality of life for severely disabled people. That extension will be a valuable help to the oldest recipients of the allowance to make plans for meeting their future mobility needs in the knowledge that payments will be made for five years longer than under the present arrangements.

To sum up, this is a Bill which promotes, I believe, a more coherent social security system and one which takes account of a changing world. It reflects the environment of a modern labour market and creates conditions of still greater flexibility to vitalise the economy of the 1990s. It challenges difficult issues where the easy course might have been to let matters run—like the differing treatment of men and women in pension schemes; like the outdated funding of the national insurance scheme; or the anomalous and unacceptable relationship between benefits and awards of damages.

Above all, the Bill embodies our vision of the social security system: one which gives full support to those who cannot support themselves; which stands on a firm link between benefits and contributions paid in work; and which encourages people to take on their full responsibilities to support themselves and their families by their own efforts. On that basis, I commend the Bill to the House.

5.28 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This is, if I dare use the phrase, a curate's egg of a Bill. There are elements in it which at first sight appear to merit at least a cautious welcome, bitter experience having taught us to beware social security Ministers apparently bearing gifts. There are also elements that concern us, and at the centre of the Bill there is a set of proposals that are potentially the most catastrophic that we have seen yet from this Government.

Two elements that we can welcome are the lifting of the age barrier for mobility allowance and the moves, following an EEC directive, towards equal treatment for men and women in occupational pension schemes. However, we shall want to probe the Government's full intentions in Committee. Nor do we object to the Government rectifying a few of their many mistakes—such as in the uprating of the reduced earnings allowance paid, as it is, only to those disabled by industrial injury or disease. We well remember that in 1986 thousands of those so disabled saw their benefit frozen as they reached retirement age, with a saving to the Government, at their expense, of millions of pounds per year. Not content, in 1988 the Government cut their payment by 75 per cent. at retirement, with a further saving of £10 million per year, and individual losses for the majority of recipients on reaching retirement of almost £20 per week. Against that background, we entirely agree that these disabled people should not be inadvertently cheated by mistake of a few pence extra on the amount that the Government still permit them to retain.

We shall want to examine other aspects of the Bill in more depth, although perhaps it is right to place on record our strong reservations about the proposals on the treatment of damages awarded by the courts—whatever the defects may be of the present law—to which the Secretary of State drew attention, and which were apparently rejected by all those consulted, including the CBI, the Law Society, the TUC and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council. Such unanimity has not been seen since

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

the Government's initial proposals for family credit to be paid through the wage packet—and look what happened to that.

Other proposals we whole-heartedly oppose. First is the decision to scrap the three-day contract on which national insurance was established by raising the entire cost of national insurance benefits—such as pensions for the old, the sick and the widows—from national insurance contributions. The Government are shifting the burden again towards those on low or average pay, while the wealthy not only do not pay their fair share: they do not even pay the same share as the less well-off. From any Government this blatant exploitation of the less well-off to benefit the much better off would be damaging, but from this Government, who use the excuse of what they call the burden of national insurance contributions to cut the State earnings-related pension scheme—indeed, to try to abolish it—it is rank hypocrisy. Everyone who pays national insurance contributions and everyone who draws retirement, invalidity or widow's pension has been cheated by the Government, because money raised in earnings-related contributions has not been paid out in benefits.

The Government have made a steady and increasing profit out of the national insurance scheme—some £3,000 million last year alone. They are able to abolish the taxpayers' contribution to the scheme not because of prudent management or because of any growth in employment or because the economy is booming, but because they have been prepared to defraud pensioners.

That brings me to the proposals that form the centrepiece of the Bill. It would be misleading to call it the heart of the Bill, because it could not be put forward by a Government who retained a heart. The Minister's description of the Bill made it sound quite innocuous, technical and inoffensive, designed to help people back into employment—what a pity that it is not so.

Careful examination of what is proposed shows that the Government have moved on from merely wishing to blame unemployment on its victims. They are now prepared to harass and to hound them to an extent which is without precedent in our employment or social security law. The Secretary of State was, perhaps, not clear on this point, but existing law allows for people's availability for work to be tested if it is called into question. However, the Government have decided to resurrect a test for willingness to work that was abolished in 1930, which makes it somewhat extraordinary for the Secretary of State to call us the people who were relying on the shibboleths of the thirties.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does the hon. Lady believe that people claiming unemployment benefit should look for work and should take a job if one is offered, or that they should not?

Mrs. Beckett: That is an extraordinarily silly question and is quite unworthy of the hon. Gentleman, who is supposed to be one of the intellectuals on the Conservative Benches. Of course we do not believe that people should not try to find work. We are conscious of the feelings that many unemployed people have when they cannot find work. That is not the point, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Quite harsh tests already exist—even more harshly employed by this Government—to test people's willingness to work. The Government are reintroducing a test from the 1920s, which, indeed, was abolished in 1930. As I believe was generally accepted at the time, the test was introduced not to help people to find work, to which it was quite irrelevant, but to limit the costs of supporting the unemployed. Those who introduced it then had three excuses not available to their successors today. First, as it was a new test, they had by definition no experience, as we have now, of how it might work in practice. Secondly, they were facing one of the most grave economic crises in our history, whereas the Government tell us that our problems today are of overweening success. Thirdly, and perhaps most serious of all, they introduced the test alongside safeguards intended to prevent its unreasonable use. The test in this Bill has not only had those safeguards removed, but the entire onus of the test is reversed. Let no one say that the Conservative party has learnt nothing in the 60 years since the test of genuinely seeking work was abolished—it has learnt how to make it harsher.

I have not the smallest doubt that, during these debates, we shall be told that we exaggerate or that we misunderstand how the test will work. I shall remind the House, therefore, of how in 1930 William Beveridge described it, even in its original and, by today's standards, safeguarded form. He said when referring to the test:

"The condition will not, it may be hoped, ever rise from its dishonoured grave."

Clearly, we should regard the Secretaries of State for Social Security and Employment as first and second gravedigger, prepared to resurrect the 1920s test not just with full but with increased rigour.

Prior to the test's abolition in 1930, someone was required to show that he was seeking work in "suitable" employment—not any old employment, but "suitable" employment, which is a word removed completely from the test in the Bill. In the 1920s, they did not leave it at that. They defined the context of suitability, and did so in terms that, clearly, the Conservative party of the 1920s found less unacceptable than the Conservative party of today. Without losing benefit, people could refuse to seek or to take a job with lower wages or worse conditions in their own area. Even a job elsewhere had to be on offer at fair terms and conditions for that area. Account was taken of the likelihood and the danger of skill impairment and the prevention of a return to his normal employment if someone was forced to take any job.

Most important of all—this brings me to the question raised by the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester)—they could be pressed, even against these safeguards, to take only full-time work. The sting in the tail of clause 9 is that any or all of the pressures that it imposes can be used to push someone against his will or his best interests into part-time or temporary work. Yet despite those qualifications, in practice the test became hated and discredited, because it was a test of a willingness to work which was divorced from whether there was any work.

This Government of prosperity, in any case, want no truck with any safeguards. They refer to such things as fair wages and conditions. One can be drummed out of the Brownies for using words like that in today's Tory party. Indeed, the Government have reversed the entire import of that part of the law. Far from it being the norm, the standard, to take account of the nature of the job on offer, under clause 9 the norm, the standard, is that the wages

and conditions on offer are entirely irrelevant. They are to be ignored in deciding whether someone has good cause for not seeking or for refusing a job, although some flexibility may be allowed against that general rule.

The Government have shown signs—one must be fair to them—of what they no doubt regard as generosity. The Secretary of State said it was right to give people time to find a similar job, if they can. The Government will give them time, but within a maximum, of course—they would not want to run the risk of this gracious gesture being misused in any way by the ungrateful. The Government are prepared to wait as long as 13 weeks—about three months—before this legislation will be brought into play.

Of course, to be fair to him, the Secretary of State identified that as the maximum. No doubt it will be only really deserving cases—those who have full consideration given to the length of time that they have been employed previously, to their experience, to the range of opportunities open to them, which are the Government's criteria—who will receive the full 13 weeks. If they have been unwise enough to write to the DSS or, perhaps, the Home Office for work, they probably would not even receive an acknowledgement within 13 weeks.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Lady quoted Beveridge, but she was rather selective. If she had looked further on in the report, she would have seen that Beveridge suggested that 13 weeks was the longest period in which people should draw benefit before compulsorily attending a training centre. Did not Beveridge say that the danger of providing benefits, which are both adequate in amount and indefinite in duration, was that men, being creatures who adapt themselves to circumstances, may settle down to them?

Mrs. Beckett: I did not hear the end of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, because my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was speaking to me, but I am told that I did not miss anything.

I concede the hon. Gentleman's point that Beveridge referred to that period. However, even allowing for the words of Beveridge, it still appears to us that it is wrong for the Government to resurrect this basic, harsh condition, which he so condemned, and to continue to use that as the test against which those 13 weeks would be set. Nothing that the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) has said invalidates that basic point.

I remind the House that, after the maximum period of 13 weeks grace, the person involved can be forced not just to take lower paid work or work in less favourable conditions, but temporary or part-time work. I am especially alarmed about that because, as Ministers know all too well, although I doubt that they have drawn it to the attention of their Back Benchers, the present benefit system offers possible substantial penalties in the withdrawal of benefit rights from those who choose to work on a part-time or temporary basis only. The short title of the Bill should be, "Heads I win, tails you lose." It will have devastating impact.

The period of grace against the test in the Bill, which will not exceed 13 weeks, is not a period of grace. It is a sop, a token gesture, a period of consideration before compulsion begins to apply. It is all too short a time for many to adjust to the loss of their jobs, especially if that job loss is now to be combined with job searching against a harsh deadline. If the deadline pressures people into a mistaken decision and into a job which they soon want to leave, they will face the loss of all rights to unemployment benefit and, at most, a reduced rate of income support, probably for six months, because they have voluntarily left work.

Those who leave work voluntarily cannot benefit from the trial period allowed in the Bill, because it is for the long-term unemployed only. The Secretary of State referred to that trial period in answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, although it was irrelevant to the question. I notice, however, that the maximum trial period allowed forces the long-term unemployed to make a decision to leave—if they make that decision at all—before they are allowed, under clause 8, to requalify for unemployment benefit.

Under clause 7 there will be a list—not an exhaustive one—of examples of the steps that each claimant will be expected to take every week. In some circumstances someone may be deemed to be seeking work—for example, when they have a job, but have not started it. I appreciate that, otherwise, the Government may have looked slightly silly. The fact that such a common-sense matter must be specifically allowed for shows how rigidly the Government mean the Bill to operate.

Week in and week out, the claimant must show that action has been taken to look for work. I noted what the Secretary of State said to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) about not forcing people dependent upon local labour market conditions to take unsuitable work. If that is the Secretary of State's view, however, it is hard to see why the Government have gone to all the trouble in clause 9 to remove all references to suitable work. I do not believe that the Secretary of State's remarks make any difference. It may not mean that someone will be disallowed benefit depending on the local labour market conditions, but I do not believe that those conditions will make any difference to the way in which the test will operate or to the way in which claimants will be forced to make statements about what they have done every week.

I want to emphasise the word "claimant". Whatever terms the Government may use to justify the provisions in the Bill and whatever they sound like, it may well be that the person affected is not receiving a single penny piece from the state. There are many unemployed people who must be available for work—that is the term now—but who have used up their entitlement to unemployment benefit or who cannot receive income support perhaps because their partner is in work. They must sign on to receive their pension credits. That person may have worked for 30 years and it may be their first experience of being unable to find work. They tend to describe their situation as being "thrown on the scrap heap". Because people need between 30 and 40 years of contributions or credits—a large share of a lifetime's work—to receive a full state pension, the person unemployed after 30 years of work will be caught by the legislation.

Let us consider the core resentment that the Bill will rightly earn. The overwhelming majority of those people without work are decent men and women who have no choice about being without work. They include many whose health is impaired by sickness or injury who have been ruled "fit for light work" to save money on disability benefits. No consideration has been given or will be given to whether light work is available or whether any employer would hire such people to do it. We are also talking about

[Mrs. Beckett]

many who have been made redundant at what they thought was a fairly young age until they discovered that employers think otherwise. If one is as young as one feels, those people feel old before their time.

The Bill puts all the pressure on the unemployed and does nothing to address the attitudes they face from employers. It ignores the fact that, on the Government's figures, there is no work for at least two out of three or, more probably, five out of six of those whom the Bill will force on to the treadmill of a tiring, depressing and utterly fruitless job search.

The Government and the Secretary of State have drawn heavily on the Department of Employment survey of the London labour market, although I recognise that the right hon. Gentleman also referred to the national survey and what it said about how often people look for jobs. The Government have ignored, however, other elements of the former survey. It suggested that people without work were realistic in their expectations of the wages that they may command. That means that the major switch in law represented by clause 9, which pushes people towards low-paid work, is unjustified. It is not the unrealistic demands of the unemployed that are keeping them out of work, but lack of work.

The surveys also drew attention to the attitudes of employers and their reluctance to recruit those who have been out of work for more than six months, whatever their qualifications or experience. It showed that many employers, even in boroughs with high levels of unemployment, did not know that such a pool of labour was available. We have heard nothing about what the Government are doing about the attitudes, ignorance and prejudice of employers.

The survey also reported:

"Most benefit claimants . . . are keen to work".

That judgment reinforces similar reports previously published over the years by the Manpower Services Commission. The report suggested that, at most, a minority might not be actively looking for work. Even then, the Government have not considered that, among that minority, there may be many who have good cause to believe that active search for work would merely add to the mountain of rejections and humiliations that they have already suffered because of their age, colour or disability.

Unless the Government take action, on a scale commensurate with that in this Bill, to change the attitudes of such employers, they know that the search on which people will be sent will serve no purpose except to pander to the prejudices of those who have never suffered unemployment and never expect to do so.

I am reminded of the observations made in 1929 by William Jones KC, spiritual ancestor of the Secretary of State. He described how the then law was applied to the Rhymney valley to pressurise men into tramping substantial distances to look for work in neighbouring valleys. He said:

"We know it is useless for the men to go over the hill, because the first thing they are told is 'We have our own unemployed here: go back to your own valley.' We know that, but we do not tell the men."

As in the days of William Jones 60 years ago, so now. The Bill is not designed to help people back into work, it is intended to prod and goad them and to bring the unlucky ones—when there is not enough work, there will be many of them—up against their failings and failures over and over again, week after week after week.

Ms. Short: What my hon. Friend has said so powerfully is true. Does she agree that the real strategy underlying the Bill is to force people to take lower-paid work? We have all heard the Government proclaim the prosperous boom, but 40 per cent. of our work force earn low pay. The Bill will mean more of that, as well as more of the humiliation that my hon. Friend has described.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is entirely right, because, unless that was so, it hardly accounts for the way in which the Government have ignored that part of the Department's survey or explains why they have also retained the provisions that take no account of pay.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it the policy of the Opposition that the unemployed should be obliged to look for work? If so, how does the hon. Lady propose that that should be done?

Mrs. Beckett: First of all, I am not entirely sure whether the hon. Gentleman has been here while I have been speaking but, if he has, he will have heard me say, first of all, that yes, of course we agree that people should be seeking work, and indeed, most of them are. Is the hon. Gentleman contending that most of them are not, and is that the policy of the Conservative party? That certainly appears to be the policy behind this Bill.

Secondly, I have already said—again, if the hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would have heard—that we believe that the existing tests of willingness to work are quite sufficient, and indeed, can be quite stringent and can debar people whom we think should not be debarred. There is no need for those tests to be further strengthened.

My hon. Friend, as I say, mentioned that she believes that the Government's intention is to drive people into more low-paid jobs, and I have no doubt that that is the case. I have no doubt also that it is the Government's wish and intention to drive still more people off the unemployment register. I have no doubt that it will drive some of them off the register, even if they have to sacrifice their pension credits, and, ultimately, their full pension. I have no doubt either that it will drive some of them nearly crazy.

The financial memorandum suggests that money will be saved. The only estimate of the cost in people is that of the staff who might be required. There is no estimate of the distress, the illness, the divorces or the suicides. Let me remind the House again of the justification the Government offers. They claim that there are 700,000 unfilled vacancies and over 2 million unemployed people registered. The Government know, of course, only of 250,000 actual vacancies, which they multiply by guesswork to get an estimate of the overall picture. Independent estimates suggest that it is more like 3 million people who are pursuing those 250,000 or 700,000 vacancies. Certainly there is no question that there are remotely enough vacancies for the number of unemployed people, however they are fiddled or calculated, although to listen to Ministers and some Government Back Benchers one might think there were more vacancies than there are people unemployed.

The purpose and the effect of this Bill is to foster the idea that all that is needed for the unemployed to find work

is for them to look harder for work, although the Government's own figures show that many of them cannot possibly find it. For the long-term unemployed especially, who cannot get work, some adjustment to the reality of their position is not just desirable; it is vital. That is how they hold together the remnants of their self-respect, their dignity, their pride, perhaps even their sanity. Heaven knows this Bill is doing enough to encourage a climate of opinion that denies them the respect of others, and the reality for most of them remains that there is no work, and nothing in this Bill changes that one iota.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is my hon. Friend aware that there is no such thing as a stack of vacancies? There is a flow of vacancies; vacancies flow in and filled vacancies flow out. Most of the vacancies are filled in a couple of weeks or so and most of the vacancies go to employed people who are switching jobs. The unemployed do not get these vacancies, because of the recruitment policies of employers, and even in the London survey, if the Minister will read the foreword written by the Secretary of State, he says that only "a small minority" of the unemployed are not seeking work.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is entirely correct, and I am most grateful to him for making those points. I would only say that what I am addressing is the Government's arguments rather than the reality. Of course it is bad for people to despair and for people to give up hope, and certainly one must wish that the long-term unemployed receive encouragement, but it is also bad for them to be forced continually to jump hurdles at which they are bound to fall. This Bill does not offer a helping hand to the unemployed; it shows them a mailed fist. Unemployment itself has a shattering effect on the lives of many who face it. It is an unexploded grenade, and in this Bill the Government are pulling the pin.

5.53 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): The Government's social security programmes have an impact on the lives of millions of people: on the unemployed, on the elderly, on the families and also on the young, and social security spending, we all know, has risen inexorably since the foundation of the welfare state. Today, it represents the largest single item of Government expenditure, accounting for one pound in three of public spending. The average taxpayer currently contributes about £11 a week to social security spending.

It is crucial that spending on this scale is effective. Equally, it is essential that our social security programmes not only provide immediate help for those who are in need, but that they do not have perverse and unwelcome long-term effects. It is right that our social security system should evolve to ensure that it does not institutionalise dependence on the state, that it does not create barriers to enterprise and wealth creation, and that it does not undermine the family.

The Bill represents another very important stage in the evolution of the social security system. It builds on the 1986 reforms and underlines the Government's commitment to a system of benefits which provide help where it is most needed, at the same time as reinforcing the principles of individual responsibility and self-help. Understandably, much attention has focused on the changes to the rules governing unemployment benefit, and these changes will, I believe, be almost universally perceived outside this Chamber as being long overdue and common-sense adjustments.

The man on the proverbial Clapham omnibus would be the first to subscribe to the notion that the very minimum the state can expect from those out of work in return for the payment of benefit is that they actively go about finding work. The idea that the state should perpetually subsidise those who seem happy to remain unemployed indefinitely not only offends the average person's view of what is fair; we all know that a system which allows such a state of affairs to persist is fundamentally flawed since it actually creates dependence and robs individuals of responsibility for themselves.

Equally important principles are at stake elsewhere in this Bill. Clause 4 on liable relatives is a case in point. The savings that will accrue from this change are relatively small, although by no means insignificant, but of far greater importance is the fact that, by obliging single parents to take responsibility for their children while they are in the sixth form, we are bringing the treatment of single-parent families into line with family law. Why should a single parent receive more favourable treatment from the state in this matter than a couple with children?

There is no reason why the taxpayer should be forced to underwrite the maintenance of 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education simply because they come from a single-parent family. Responsibility for the welfare and maintenance of children will in a free society always rest principally with parents; that basic rule applies equally to couples and to single-parent families.

The family is the cornerstone of our society, the basic and most essential unit, and it would be wrong to allow a system to persist which discriminates in favour of single-parent families and thereby against couples with children. Equally, we should not tolerate a system which enables parents to evade their basic responsibility as parents, and we should be aware that the very knowledge that the state will provide for children may remove an obstacle to fathers deserting their families.

Some, of course, will claim that these changes are designed to punish one-parent families in pursuit of minor cost savings, but I for one do not regard £2·5 million as small change. It is more than enough to pay for an extra 100 policemen on the streets of our inner cities or to fund important medical research.

The real purpose of clause 4 is to create a benefit system that encourages responsibility and self-reliance, a system that does not unintentionally provide incentives for fathers to abandon their children, and it is of course essential that the state provides help to the needy single-parent families, but it is even more important that the very availability of those benefits does not encourage illegitimacy and the break-up of families. The happiness and well-being of children depends to a far greater extent on their family background and on the love and care of their parents than on the availability of cash benefits from the state.

The primary aim of our social security system should be to use benefits to help to build a stable and loving environment in which children can be raised. The provision of benefits cannot be seen as a substitute for parental love and responsibility. It is precisely for that reason that the clause is to be welcomed.

Perhaps the main themes of the Bill are fairness and economic efficiency. Nowhere are those concepts better illustrated than in clause 19, which implements the EC

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Council directive on equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes. I was very pleased to hear the welcome given to this clause by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on behalf of the Opposition. I know that that change will be welcomed by millions of working women throughout the country. In the last 10 years we have managed to shed so many of the outdated stereotypes of what women can and cannot do. Women are achieving more than ever: in the professions, in business and—dare I say it?—also in politics.

Clause 19 of the Social Security Bill will bring to an end discrimination in employment-related schemes. Sensibly, it will also stop indirect discrimination against women in pension and other benefit schemes. Such discrimination is often unintentional and usually the result of custom and tradition, but it is no less damaging or unfair than more overt forms of discrimination. Benefit schemes which discriminate against women as a result of their family or marital status are unfair to women, and also represent an obstacle to the smooth operation of the labour market.

At a time when the number of young people in the labour market is contracting—when employers will increasingly have to consider employing older people, especially married women—our economy simply cannot afford to place obstacles in the way of the employment of women. All such barriers are a disincentive to women to seek work and an impediment to the creation of prosperity and jobs.

Clause 19 will also ensure that women who take maternity leave do not lose benefit entitlement as a result. In future, women who take leave to have a baby will, for the purposes of calculating benefit levels, be treated exactly as though they had been at work. That is a very sensible reform which will help women to reconcile the competing pressures of children and work.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Roe: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish the point; then I shall give way.

I know that many women who take maternity leave are immensely irked when they discover that the period of their absence is treated, for the purposes of calculating pensions, as though they had been on a prolonged holiday. Any woman who has had children would tell us otherwise.

Mr. Corbyn: I agree with the hon. Lady that much of this legislation acts as a disincentive to women to return to work and that it discriminates against them. Does she also agree that one of the major problems over women returning to work is the lack of pre-school child care facilities in this country, which has the worst record of any country in western Europe? Does she not believe that the Government ought to address that problem?

Mrs. Roe: I believe that parents have a responsibility to consider the welfare of their children. I started a new career in middle age, having first reared my family. Parents must consider the welfare of their children. Women who stay at home to look after their children do a very important job.

There is one further item of unfinished business that relates to pensions and the equality of treatment between men and women—the equalisation of the pension age. Those of us who believe in giving women a fairer deal in matters of employment and social security legislation recognise that the argument works both ways.

On the pension age, women should understand that the principle of equality may require them to retire later than at present. I know that the Government have accepted the principle of equalisation, but the implementation of that principle is less than straightforward. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will reassure the House that the Government's proposals will be very carefully worked through. The Government should not be rushed into a crucial decision that will affect the lives of generations of workers and pensioners.

The 1986 social security reforms dragged our lumbering benefits system into the late 20th century. That great reform showed that it was possible to provide help for those who are in genuine need without eroding the responsibility, initiative and enterprise upon which the happiness of individuals and families so greatly depends. This Bill represents a further important adjustment to the operation of the social security system. By making social policy operate in a much fairer fashion and by reinforcing the paramount importance of individual responsibility, these changes will promote what Opposition Members are fond of calling economic efficiency and social justice. I prefer to call it prosperity and happiness. Therefore, I fully support the Bill.

6.5 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): We are discussing a renegotiation of responsibilities between the individual and the state. I disagree fundamentally with one of the points that the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) made at the beginning of her speech—that if all of us were travelling on the back of an omnibus to Clapham common this Bill would strike us as fair. It would strike us as unfair—not for the reasons that have been put forward so far in the debate but because the renegotiation between the state and the individual is, under this Government, only one way. The Bill changes the duties and responsibilities of the individual to seek work. It does nothing about the duties and responsibilities of the state to ensure that work is available for the individual.

Because I want to develop that theme briefly, and because some of it may be controversial, let me begin by referring to a point that unites both sides of the House of Commons—that the vast majority of the unemployed are seeking work to the very best of their ability. I believe that I speak on behalf of the vast majority of the unemployed in Birkenhead when I say that they see nothing wrong with the idea that their superhuman efforts to find work should be matched by every other unemployed person. However, the question that we have to ask ourselves is how we are to treat those people who genuinely cannot find work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) referred to the abolition of a hated rule in the 1930s. I go back to the negotiations that Margaret Bondfield had with the TUC and the employers. The TUC was not soft on this issue. It did not wish the message to go out that it was feather-bedding a tiny minority who did not wish to seek work. The TUC thought that it was perfectly proper that the test should be applied, but in the final resort the real test, and the only test, was to present someone with a job. That is the test that we should be implementing today. I should happily vote for it.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Would my hon. Friend care to add to that test the condition that the job should be properly remunerated, and that decent human conditions should be provided?

Mr. Field: If we were to insist on decent human conditions, large numbers of my constituents would not be in work, given the circumstances in which they have to work. However, I was taking it for granted that both sides of the House agree that the statement should stand that Lord Joseph made to this House—that nobody should be forced to take a job that makes him financially worse off.

Before my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) intervened, I was about to make the point that, given the emphasis that this Government have placed on tightening up on the tiny minority of people who are not using all their energies to find work, they ought to be appearing before us today in sackcloth and ashes.

Since 1979, we have seen a number of Government reforms that have made it more difficult for people to find jobs. That is why I spoke against the Government's measures to break the link with signing on in a place where the job vacancies were advertised. The Government pushed through that reform for the simple reason that it enabled them to cut the size of the Civil Service. When they brought forward proposals to abolish the re-establishment centres, I spoke and voted against them. I thought it wrong that there was not that final sanction.

When the Government come forward with these measures, I suppose we should be pleased that there will be much rejoicing in heaven over those sinners who repent today. However, it is interesting to note the means by which they bring forward their reforms, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South pointed out, given the Government's track record, gives us cause for concern about how people will be treated if they cannot find work.

This renegotiation between the state and the individual, which is all on one side, is an incomplete renegotiation and a half measure. I want to spend my couple of minutes emphasising the other side of that contract that must be drawn up between the state and the individual. I wish to go on record as saying—I fight elections on this platform—that unemployed people have a duty to use everything in their power to find work. The vast majority of my constituents do that with considerable skill. However, if we are not to make a mockery of people when they put in that affort, the other side of the contract is to say, "Yes, the state's responsibility must match that of the individual," but the Bill is totally silent on that matter.

We should ask the Government for three measures if we are satisfactorily to renegotiate the deal between the state and the individual and the responsibilities of each as we approach the 1990s. First, support services should exist for people who actively seek work, as the vast majority of our unemployed constituents do. Year by year, the Government have cut the size of those services. Let me give the House one example which shows that—the effort that the Swedish Government put into helping people find work compared with this Government. Obviously, there is a different ratio between the number of unemployed here and in Sweden, but the Swedish Government employ 20 times more staff than the British Government in trying to make sure that people are trained and suitably placed in work. We should welcome the beginnings of this renegotiation, but let us also be clear about the full, comprehensive terms on which we want that contract renegotiated.

Secondly, what will happen to those of our constituents who put everything into their employment training course to make it a success, if there is no job at the end of that course? Will the Government say that they can go back on benefit? Will they think of some other way of roughing up those people? Will they say, "You have now done your duty. Our responsibility is to provide you with some form of work and we will provide that form of temporary work"? I should like the Minister to answer that point when he winds up this evening.

Thirdly, we must consider full employment. The Minister made much of Pamela Meadows's report. Perhaps I should say that he did not make much of it, as he waved it about and then quoted from another survey about the tightness of the labour market in parts of London. When Opposition Members try to put full employment back on the political agenda, we start from the basis that there is full employment in some areas of the country and in some trades, so we are not talking about a crude Keynesian policy of inflating demand in an attempt to move back to full employment. We are asking for much more selective—or, as the Government would like us to argue, more targeted—measures.

My constituents and those of many of my hon. Friends believe that the Government can make some moves to ensure that we move back to full employment in those areas that are now hard hit by unemployment. The Government can control where they place their jobs and contracts. We want to see much more effort than we get even from this Secretary of State. He is better than most Secretaries of State when it comes to moving Government jobs out of areas of high employment to areas of low employment.

We need to see those Government jobs moved into areas of high unemployment and so begin to underpin the local economy, so that the private sector can build on that. The private sector does not come to Birkenhead in the numbers that we would like, for the simple reason that so many other areas in Merseyside are much more attractive. The private sector will not come until we raise the level of money and demand in that local economy that attracts them.

This begins to lay the basis of a move back to full employment. I speak as someone in favour of renegotiating the contract betweeen the state and the individual with which this Bill deals. I criticise the Bill, as do other Opposition Members—and, I hope, Conservative Members—because it is a partial measure which does all the renegotiation on the individual side and does nothing to deliver on the state side.

The state needs to come up with three moves if it is to match the changes that we want in respect of the individual. First, we want to see placement services and help for people trying to find work, to match those, for example, in Sweden. Secondly, we want a reply from the Government about what will happen to those of our constituents who have gone through the mill, including ET. Will they be kicked back to the dole queues afterwards or will the Government come up with schemes of work for them? Thirdly, areas such as the one that I represent desperately need their economies underpinning, and that

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will come only from the Government. If the contract were renegotiated on those terms, many of us would feel much happier than we so far feel about the measure.

6.17 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). I have listened with great interest to his comments, both in this House and in the media, for many years. Many Conservative Members respect him for the things he says and the activities he pursues with great vigour and determination in the House and elsewhere. I might go so far as to place it on record that he has as many friends on this side of the House as he has enemies on that side. We listen with great interest to what he says.

Neither the hon. Gentleman nor the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who is appropriately dressed in pink for this occasion, referred to the taxpayer, the economy and the changes that need to be made, bearing in mind the demographic changes that lie ahead, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) referred.

I am delighted to take part in this debate, for a number of reasons. This is the first occasion that I have had since my translation from Government to the Back Benches to take part in a major policy debate. On this occasion, I have the strange feeling of being able to say what I believe and to believe what I say.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Is the Minister for Social Security saying what he thinks?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Lady must contain herself.

I remember many occasions at the Dispatch Box when I thought that if I had the choice of being here or in France, I would rather be in France. The second reason why I am delighted to be here is that I wish to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and his ministerial team for introducing this important and much-needed measure which addresses our social security system and seeks to bring about much-needed reform through a radical policy which I hope will be the first of several initiatives in this area over the years.

The encouragement of individual freedom and the maximisation of opportunities for individual success, while taking account and care of those who through no fault of their own are going through temporary or permanent difficult times, have always been a cornerstone of the philosophy of this party and this Government. It is refreshing to have a fresh re-emphasis and reaffirmation of it in this Bill.

That we can discuss these reforms against the background of a successful economy is undoubtedly an enormous advantage. Because of the success in and of our economy, it has been possible to provide social security expenditure at levels 40 per cent. above inflation. From listening to the speeches of Labour Members, this Bill and the trend that I hope it will start on the subject which it addresses is clearly a point of philosophical division between us.

This is the parting of the ways and must be so. We see the legislation as targeting and focusing help on those in need. Clearly it will provide a better service to British people by making the benefits system easier to understand and, for those who work within the system, easier to administer. Moreover, it will encourage greater independence in personal pension provision, which I fully welcome. Of those advantages, the most significant is the first—the proper targeting of help for and support of those in need.

I welcome several clauses. I welcome clause 3, which requires employers to keep a record of the earnings on which their employees have paid national insurance contributions. I know from constituency experience that, when employers fail to keep proper records, it can cause enormous anxiety to those approaching retirement who feel that there may be a gap between what they know they have paid and the information that the record offices have. The clause brings that into the open and destroys a gap in the system.

I welcome clause 4 because it deals with liable relatives and provides an extension of liability. I hope that, on Report, we shall see that the Standing Committee has given long and determined thought to the question of one-parent families and the attitude of those who, having created children, decide to leave the family and throw the children on the state. The House must welcome the clause. I hope that the Committee will make it clear to those who may wish to take that opportunity at some time in the life of their family that they must take account of their personal responsibilities, having created the children in the first place.

I welcome clause 5, which extends the upper age limit for the payment of mobility allowance from 75 to 80. All hon. Members will welcome that provision, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend on it.

I welcome clause 9, because it requires a person claiming unemployment benefit to show that he or she is actively seeking work. I welcome it because it will enshrine in law that which most people believe is the case but which is not the case—that benefit should not be paid if there are opportunities to gain work which are not being actively pursued by those seeking benefit. I think I am right in saying that this is not an original provision, as some of our colleagues in the Commonwealth—for example, Labour Australia—follow such a provision——

Mrs. Beckett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: Of course I shall give way in one moment, although the hon. Lady did not give way to me. Our neighbours across the Irish sea also follow this provision. Clearly, there is evidence of support for this provision elsewhere in the world.

Mrs. Beckett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I apologise for not having given way to him, but I shall do so another time. I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman raises the issue of what is done elsewhere, because it is included in the Central Office brief. However, that brief does not tell him that, although some such provision, which could loosely be described by the same words as are in the Bill, exists in the countries to which he referred, in none of those countries does it operate in any way, shape or form as it is intended to do under this Bill.

Mr. Dunn: I am interested to hear that the hon. Lady is in receipt of Central Office briefs. Her educational stocks must be piling up rapidly. From what she says, at least it

seems that she agrees that the principle behind the provision is being followed in part or in full by other countries. She said so.

Mrs. Beckett: No. The hon. Gentleman will remember that the Government are reluctant to make glib comparisons between one social security system and another—for example, on pension levels. I said that some of those different countries use the word "actively" in their legislation and some have various tests, but that in not one does the provision operate in the same way or to the same extent as it is intended to under this Bill. The comparison is invalid, although I recognise that it is not the hon. Gentleman's fault, because he has been misled.

Mr. Dunn: I am grateful to be so informed, as befits two former Education Ministers arguing across the Floor of the House—but for them to do so can hardly be salutary, educational or beneficial. At least the hon. Lady pointed out that there is a principle abroad that is being followed, and I welcome her support. She may make her interpretation of what happens abroad, as indeed I do.

In her speech, to which I listened with great interest, the hon. Lady did not answer the point ably made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redmond), and perhaps I may make it again. If a person is offered a suitable job for which that person is suitably qualified and turns it down, is that person, under Labour policy, still to be entitled to benefit?

[HON. MEMBERS: No.]

Mr. Frank Field: The answer to the question is that that person would not be entitled to benefit. In what the hon. Gentleman might have thought to be a rhetorical question but which we were only too pleased to answer, the hon. Gentleman asked whether the test will be that people will be offered actual jobs.

Mr. Dunn: I did not ask an answer. I asked a question. I am not in the business of asking answers, but I want answers to my questions. The whole point of tonight's debate is not only to give the Bill support, but to find out what Opposition Members think—not that there are many of them present. We are not much further forward. They have told us that such a person will not be entitled to benefit, but my hon. Friend asked whether they should be entitled to benefit, and we can check that in *Hansard*. Some Opposition Members may think that such a person should be entitled to benefit.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: When I am in full flow, I like to finish my comments. If I may finish them, I shall give way because the hon. Lady has been patient and has been listening to the debate carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham made the point that claimants should not be entitled to benefit if they refuse a job for which they are suitably qualified. I make the point that Opposition Members are of the opinion that such claimants should be entitled to benefit in that situation.

Ms. Short: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is being sincere and does not understand the legislation's existing framework or the Labour party's position. Under existing law a claimant must be available for and positively seeking work; otherwise, benefit will be disallowed. The Bill goes beyond that. It will force the unemployed into schemes that do not suit them or which are not good for their futures. It will compel them to accept jobs at levels of pay far below those that properly reflect their qualifications and skills. Current law says that claimants must be available for and take suitable jobs. Does the hon. Gentleman understand that? He is defending the Bill by describing the legislation that it replaces.

Mr. Dunn: We shall all check in *Hansard* what we have said, but the hon. Lady will find that she is wrong in the statement that she made. Later, perhaps, she will make points that will clarify exactly where she does stand. She cannot speak for the whole Labour party, in the sense that——

Ms. Short: I was only describing the law.

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Lady suggests that I do not understand Labour party policy. Nor does she, and nor does any right hon. or hon. Member understand what Labour party policy is. It is clear that tonight we have the re-emphasis of Tammany hall philosophy. The Labour party loves to have, across the community, tied interest groups at the behest of, and subject to influence from, the centre. We saw that in our debate on council house sales and on the educational reforms to which I was a party, and of which I was a supporter. We saw it also in the matter of share ownership and the involvement of workers in industry.

Mr. Corbyn: Did you agree with them?

Mr. Dunn: In time, the Labour party will come to accept those reforms as essential. As they accept the sale of council houses, at least some educational reforms, and the concept of worker involvement in industry, so will they accept the purposes and provisions contained in the Bill and in other legislation.

I make one final point to the hon. Member for Birkenhead. The people who resent social security abuses are not Surrey stockbrokers or the retired people of Fylde, but the ordinary people living on housing estates and in communities. They are decent people living according to an economic regime, who see others taking advantage of that regime. That is the fundamental distinction between our understanding of the whole social security system and that of the Opposition.

I am delighted to be resurrected, and again to be back on the Back Benches, and I am delighted to be here in support of the Bill.

6.32 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am puzzled by the turn that the debate has taken, and two points made by the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), confused me even more. Speaking for myself and for a number of my own right hon. and hon. Friends, I give the hon. Gentleman a categorical assurance that if claimants turn down suitable jobs, they are disqualified from receiving benefit. I also reassure the hon. Gentleman that we are just as interested as he is in rooting out genuine abuses, because anyone who abuses the system does so at the cost of other claimants. The hon. Gentleman seems to criticise the Opposition for taking the opposite point of view. However, our criticism of the Bill does not relate to either of those two aspects. The House should accept that that is so, and let the debate move on to more pertinent issues.

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

What also puzzles me about the debate is that Ministers on the Treasury Bench vigorously shake their heads when Opposition Members take the point that the existing law gives the Government the power to tackle those who are workshy, or whatever one likes to call it. I adduce in evidence the very good Library brief on the Bill, from which I shall quote—and people on the Treasury Bench will, I hope, spend some time clearing up this point:

"At present, Section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975 disqualifies claimaints who, 'without good cause', either 'refuse' or 'neglect to avail' themselves of 'suitable employment'. It also disqualifies people who 'without good cause' fail to follow reasonable official advice about finding suitable employment or people who turn down approved training places."

Mrs. Beckett: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will also bring to the attention of the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), who seems somewhat bewildered, the fact that the Social Security Act 1975, with its stringent provisions, which we support, was passed by a Labour Government.

Mr. Kirkwood: It was passed, albeit before my time, in 1975, and is the parent of the principal Act that the present Bill seeks to amend.

The Library brief, dealing further with the matter of a claimant actively seeking work, comments:

"An influential Commissioner's Decision [Ref.R(U) 5/80] [Item 11] stated that availability is not a passive state in which a person may be said to be available provided he is sought out. Rather it implies that the claimant takes some active steps to draw attention to his search for work. The DSS treat this as a generally applicable rule."

Either it does or it does not. In all my constituency work, I have operated on the basis that power is available to the Department.

I am astonished that the Government, and the Secretary of State in his opening remarks, appear now to refute that. There has been a great deal of shaking of heads, with the Government saying, "No, it is nothing to do with us. We cannot control people who are workshy and who abrogate their responsibilities." But the power for the Department to act already exists, and if it is not being used, I want to know why. If that power is not being exploited as it should be, that is the Government's fault. The principal reason why the Bill is unnecessary is that it gives the Government "additional" powers when, even if they do not know it, the Government already have them.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) was right to say that the Bill fundamentally redraws the state's powers and responsibilities in respect of individual unemployed claimants. Another fundamental point, which the Secretary of State glossed over in his introduction, is the abolition of the Treasury supplement, which has been until now a fundamental and integral part of the Beveridge reforms. However, when opening the debate, the Secretary of State simply waved it aside, saying that the rationale for it had gone.

A figure of £1·75 billion has been taken out of the national insurance contribution fund, which finances maternity payments, unemployment, pensions and other benefits. A sum of £1·75 billion has disappeared just like that, because the rationale for it has gone. Just imagine what could be done with that substantial amount of money. The Secretary of State could have reduced employers' or employees' contributions, which might incidentally have created more than a little employment. If he did not want to do that, he could alternatively have increased benefits.

Right hon. and hon. Members know from their constituency casework of the difficulties that many claimants are having. It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say that because the rationale for the Treasury supplement has gone, under clause 2, £1·75 billion will go out of the window just like that. The House should carefully consider the implications of that fundamental change and the consequences it will have for right hon. and hon. Members' constituents. When the Government took office, the Treasury contribution was about 18 per cent., but since 1980 it has been whittled away. The change was announced in the Autumn Statement—this came as no surprise—that it was now down to zero. The House should not accept such a fundamental change lightly.

The House should also be reminded that according to the financial memorandum in the Bill, the savings from clauses 7 to 10 will be £100 million. Fortuitously for the Government, 50,000 benefit and unemployed claimants will come off the register, too.

Changing the tests for work has some deeply worrying consequences. The hon. Member for Birkenhead made an important point about this. He said that it was a given fact, derived from Lord Joseph's statement at the time the legislation was introduced in 1975, that claimants would never be forced to accept work that would remunerate them less than the benefit they were receiving. I hope that that is true, but I turn it now into a question.

Is it true that there are circumstances in which an unemployed benefit claimant could be required to take a job under the terms of this Bill that would bring him less money in his hand than he got in benefits before being required to take it? Perhaps the hon. Member for Birkenhead will put me right about this. I do not think that the House should consider the Bill further without this being established one way or the other.

Mr. Frank Field: I hope that we shall get a clear answer when the Minister winds up, as he did not respond immediately. Perhaps it was foolish of me not to push the point; when I said that claimants would not be forced to take jobs that made them worse off, the Secretary of State agreed with me, and I assumed that it would be good to have that clearly put on the record before the Bill went into operation.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I am sure the Minister will respond to his point one way or the other——

Mr. Corbyn: You must be joking.

Mr. Kirkwood: One lives in hope. We have real worries about the legislation and its consequences.

People should accept suitable jobs that they are offered, but what will happen to the families of these claimants if benefit is withdrawn entirely? Will they be entitled to social fund loans, for example? Have the Government thought about that? Given the Government's record in this area, the Opposition parties are worried that the Government are drifting towards insisting on work, training or some other required service or activity in return for benefit—a move towards workfare. I believe that the Minister has

confirmed in written answers that that is not the Government's intention, but some of us are beginning to worry that it may indeed be their long-term intention.

Finally, clause 13 authorises the Government to pay out of the Consolidated Fund the money that was properly allocated to transitional payments. I am still worried about this. The Secretary of State earlier gave me some reassurance about the proportion of people who will gain no increase in benefit at all this April as a result of the changes brought in by the 1986 Act. I was grateful for that, but claimants in my constituency do not really know what the uprating will mean until they receive their Giro cheques.

I fear what will happen in April: there will be frustration and anger. If the Government were sensible, they would make some provision. The Secretary of State was forced to do so with the housing benefit transitional payments, which I welcomed. Machinery should be put in place to ensure that all claimants will get at least 50 per cent.—I pluck the figure out of the air—of the benefit they would expect to receive from the normal operation of the uprating formula this coming April as an additional transitional measure over some years.

The Secretary of State raises his eyebrows at that. The Consolidated Fund provision is £37 million, falling to £14 million in 1991-92. It must be possible to obtain some additional transitional protection in April. I am certain that, when the time comes, I shall be proved right about this.

We cannot support the Bill as it stands. It is muddle-headed, mean and confused. It has missed an opportunity to provide the benefits that unemployed people in particular deserve. I agree with the Secretary of State that the intention should be to give everyone the opportunity to increase his or her potential; this Bill misses the chance to do just that.

6.47 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): First, I want to praise the Bill in general. It is extremely progressive, and worthy of a Conservative Government. Tonight, however, I shall confine my remarks to unemployment benefits and entitlements.

It is difficult to discuss these matters calmly and objectively when faced with a Labour Opposition who seem to live 50, 60 or more years in the past. As the Secretary of State rightly said, the flexibility to meet new circumstances is essential, and we now live in the late 1980s, not the 1920s or 1930s. We must adapt everything to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Over the years, we have held many debates on unemployment, and I suppose that we would all agree that it is unfortunate that we need to discuss the issue so often. But is is a sad fact of life throughout the developed world that there has always been unemployment to a greater or lesser extent, so we should always use opportunities such as this to restate our deep concern for all who, through no fault of their own, are unemployed.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) spoke about divorce and other domestic problems arising from the Government's proposals to ask unemployed people to seek work. I say that those who are unemployed through no fault of their own deserve our especial concern because they are the ones who often suffer the problems of divorce, depression and the like. We must find ways of alleviating those problems. Temporarily, we do so through state assistance, but in the longer term what is most important to those people is the prospect of work.

Over the years, Conservative Governments have done much by providing an economy with growth, which improves the prosperity and hence the prospects of work for more people in this country. Our attitudes to the unemployed have been very progressive—we now have the restart arrangements, a great number of training places and much encouragement for training. More has been done by this Government in these areas than by any other.

We are discussing here the voluntarily unemployed more than the involuntarily unemployed—people who make themselves unemployed and do not try to seek work. Beveridge and 1930 have been mentioned. Opposition Members should remember the Unemployment Bill of 1933. No one in the House at that time thought that many people would not be keen to have work if work was available. So it is disappointing to hear Opposition Members suggesting that things are so much different now.

Of course we must bear in mind demography and the declining birth rate. It is also important to remember the need that employers will have for employees in the 1990s. We shall be desperately short of people to perform all the important jobs in this country then.

Almost an army of people sitting at home are voluntarily unemployed, contribute nothing to their country, and consume resources that others provide for them. We know that unemployment is an unacceptable phenomenon, but there must be a clear differentiation between those who are willing to work and those who are unwilling. Some people have been unemployed for a long time, whereas many others have become unemployed recently and are the short-term unemployed. Some people, regrettably, have been actively unemployed and remain actively unemployed. If such people put the same activity into finding new work as they put into being unemployed, the country would be far better served.

We have done much to help those who genuinely want to work. I have already referred to restart and training schemes, and it is right that we have a more enlightened and flexible view of those who are genuinely keen to find a job. There are, however, a large number of people who need greater prompting—not "prodding", but prompting —hence the need for a change in the regulations. To the layman, the idea of benefit being paid by the state to someone who is capable of working but who chooses to avoid it is an anathema.

There are those who through misfortune and inadequacy are not motivated sufficiently to look for a job. Is it not right that there should be help and encouragement for such people to fulfill themselves by working? We praise those who assist the physically and mentally disabled to find some useful work by trying to protect them from becoming——

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): What reply would the hon. Gentleman give to one of my constituents who was blinded in one eye and partially sighted in the other eye after an industrial accident at Gullick Dobson's in Wigan? The company could not provide long-term alternative employment and, sad to say, he was put on the dole. He was interviewed for the restart programme and refused benefit. He has worked all his life and fought in the second world war. Having been blinded in one eye, and being partially sighted in the other, he was interviewed for

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

the restart programme, but now he has no benefit because of the actions of the Social Security Minister. What answer can the hon. Gentleman give?

Mr. Kirkhope: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right to be concerned about that case, as we all would be. I am trying to point out that a great number of organisations and individuals do their very best to find work for the disabled and seek to ensure that they do not become locked in the isolation of their disability.

Of course, there are some people who, despite all attempts, unfortunately are still unable to work and who would give their hind teeth for the possibility of obtaining work. I remind the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members that, unfortunately, there are some who are not prepared to look for work, and that is an affront to people like the hon. Gentleman's constituent, who is, no doubt, very sorry that he cannot work; I, too, am very sorry that he cannot work. It is right to have an enlightened approach to such people. However, those who are actively avoiding work should be obliged to look for it just as actively if they want to receive benefit. Surely that is a fair suggestion and one which most people in this country would support. Everyone should do their bit to help.

Mrs. Beckett: Whether or not the people of this country would agree with that proposition is irrelevant. The Bill states that the workshy and those desperately seeking work alike will be punished every week of their lives. That includes the constituent of my of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). They will be punished because they will have to prove every week what they are doing to look for work, even when there is no work. If the hon. Gentleman does not call that punishment, he knows nothing about the unemployed.

Mr. Kirkhope: The hon. Lady does not understand the Bill, which does not seek to punish anybody. It will merely ask people to indicate that they are actively looking for work. What is wrong with that? Clearly, the hon. Lady misinterprets the proposal. The result of more people working will be greater prosperity for everybody and the old dependency culture mentality, which the hon. Lady and her party seem to be perpetuating, will change. That mentality has been brought about by decades of Socialist paternalism and that is precisely why the Labour party opposes the proposals. Dependency on the state is inherent in all its policies. We seek greater initiative and a willingness to work as a result of that initiative.

At present, the regulations are sloppy and open to abuse. Disqualification from benefit for those who turn down offers of employment is based on the premise of such refusal being without good cause and in relation to suitable employment. The word "suitable" has been referred to by other hon. Members. Anyone can claim that an offer is unsuitable—perhaps the work is hard or involves other inconveniences. It is a veritable lawyers' paradise. The removal of the word "suitable" is sensible and will ensure that fractious or unreasonable refusals are eliminated.

Clauses 7 and 10 relate to the applicant for unemployment benefit receiving it only when he or she is available for and actively seeking work—as opposed to simply being available—and are particularly important. There are many examples—no doubt other hon. Members can point them out—of employers desperately looking for workers to fill jobs. In practice, questions are raised about the efforts made by an applicant to find employment, but active steps are not conclusive evidence of effort.

Some Opposition Members appear to have misunderstood that point. We need to include the word "active" because it shows a different approach to the problem and more commitment to finding work. Availability alone, however, is open to much misinterpretation in a legal sense. Self-imposed restrictions have been limited by regulation, but can result in someone not being available. Of course, it is important that there should be differences in adjudication in different parts of the country and different circumstances, and the Bill allows for that.

The changes confirm the Government's intention to ensure that the needs of employers for workers are met by the available supply as far as possible. That will allow many more people to use their skills and talents, which are being wasted at present, and which are almost encouraged by the Labour party to be wasted. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.57 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I have been a Member of the House for almost six years. We seem to have a Social Security Bill about this time of year every year. Every year, Ministers arrive at the Dispatch Box and inform us that the previous year's Bill is inadequate in some way. I should have thought that, after almost 10 years in office, the Government would have got it right by now. Perhaps they are not really satisfied that they have yet created the nasty atmosphere and degree of central control and punishment of the poor people in this country, particularly the long-term unemployed, that they seek.

The way in which Conservative Members have been talking about unemployment implies that it is something to do with weather cycles or that it is completely beyond the control of humankind. In reality, unemployment is nothing of the kind. It is due to an economic system that seeks to rely on people being unemployed or working for very low wages.

The Government promote an economy that creates an enormous amount of wealth for a small number of people, who are well rewarded. There are more millionaires in this country than ever before. But there are also more people sleeping on the streets of London than there have been at any other time this century, and more people scraping ends together every week with decreasing facilities from the state to help them and increasing problems of health, malnutrition and emotional difficulties. That is true for large numbers of very poor people in this country and the Bill should address those serious social problems.

In common with all other hon. Members who represent either industrial or inner-city constituencies, every day of the week I come across social problems that are the creation of the Government—a few Ministers in that Government are present this evening. Last Friday, for example, at my surgery—which was busy and long as it always is—I met a youngish couple with children. The husband works as a security officer in a west end office and his wife works as a school meals assistant in my constituency. Their total income for 80 hours of work between them is £110 a week. They have suffered cuts in

housing benefit and the loss of free school meals for their children, and they are now faced with the poll tax which will come in in 18 months.

That couple put their wage slips on the desk in front of me and said, "Mr. Corbyn, how can anyone be expected to live on this and bring up a family on it in this day and age?" Nothing in the Bill does anything for that family or offers them any hope. It is quite possible that one of them will lose his or her job: neither is in a very certain occupation. The stock market crash might mean that there was no longer any need for a security officer, and cuts in the school meals service could equally lose the wife her job. But all that the couple will be told by Conservative Members in such an event is that they are feckless, useless and workshy because they are not seeking work to an adequate degree, when the work is simply not available.

Although it may be too late, I ask the Minister to develop a sense of the purpose of his job and of his Department, and to say what the Bill is doing other than to promote low wages and a cut of roughly £100 million in public expenditure. I believe that that is what is really behind it.

During the recess, and for a long time before that when I unfortunately had to stay at home owing to illness, I was able to read a fascinating and wonderfully written book called "Ten Lean Years" by Wal Hannington. He described how, in the great crash of 1931—when people were already working for low wages and living in conditions of poverty, and when crisis after crisis hit the free enterprise economy—the Government blamed the unemployed for being out of work and for not looking for it adequately, and sought to cut their benefit time after time.

We have seen exactly the same process in all the present Government's social security legislation. It is dressed up in different words, but the Government are always trying to blame those who are making a desperate effort to lead a decent life, to bring up their children in the way they want, and to live in decent housing. Their benefits are cut, and their opportunities reduced and then taken away. But they are constantly told that they live in a successful country with an enterprise economy.

If this is a successful country with an enterprise economy, why are so many people sleeping on the streets of London? Why are so many people hitch-hiking around the country looking for jobs that are not there? Why are there so many long-term unemployed with no hope of getting work, because most of the employers taking on new people for most of the new jobs that are created do not take them from the long-term unemployed register? If they are lucky, people are taken from the short-term register, but usually those taken on are already in work elsewhere. Such issues should be dealt with, both in the Social Security Bill today and in the Employment Bill tomorrow.

We disagree profoundly with a number of clauses in this Bill. However, I want to talk particularly about people looking for work and whether work is available for them. We are always told that thousands of jobs are available. When pressed, London Tories reach for a copy of the *Evening Standard* and find that there are 100 vacancies for computer operators. But someone who has been a skilled worker in industry will probably not be able to take on a job as a computer operator: not many people have experience of such work. And so it goes on.

I looked at the figures for my borough. According to the Department of Employment, in September 1988—the latest month for which the figures that I sought were available—there were 718 registered vacancies. That was in the London borough of Islington, just outside the ring of wealthy inner London, which contains considerable poverty.

I recognise that not all employers register vacancies, although I think that they should be compelled to; I think that every vacancy should be registered with the Department of Employment. But if the number of registered vacancies is multiplied by four, that means roughly 3,000 vacancies in the borough—and that is a very optimistic interpretation of the possible number of unregistered vacancies. I looked up the unemployment figures for the nearest equivalent period, November 1988. The number of registered unemployed in the borough was 11,297. That means that 11,297 people were chasing 718 vacancies.

A more accurate definition of unemployment is not those who are registered unemployed, because, owing to all the changes in regulations, many thousands have been forced off the register—not into work, but into poverty. According to figures produced by the unemployment unit, which calculates unemployment on the basis on which it was calculated when the present Government came into office, 16,022 people were unemployed at that time, searching for—according to the Department's figures—718 vacancies, but possibly as many as 3,000. That is still less than one vacancy per five unemployed people, even if we assume a skill match.

The way in which the Department's officials conduct restart interviews and the way in which people are forced to look for jobs that may or may not exist, or that may or may not be suitable for them, suggests an over-simplification of the problem and a fundamental misunderstanding of it. I do not know many people, if any, who like being unemployed and living on benefit; who like the indignity of not having a job to go to. But I know many people who deeply resent being humiliated at restart interviews every few months and being forced to answer endless detailed and frankly unpleasant questions, only to be told that they are not suitable for work. Many of those people simply cannot find work, because it is not there to be found.

We should examine the way in which the figures have increased. In 1985, payment was withheld from 53,000 people because they were deemed not available for work. In 1987, the figure doubled to 107,000. I do not know what the figures for 1988 or 1989 will be, but I bet that they will be a substantial increase on last year's figure. The basic thrust of all that the Government are doing is to force people off the register by any possible means so that they can claim, quite falsely, that prosperity is evenly spread throughout the country and that unemployment is genuinely falling.

What the Government also do—this is linked to other legislation that they have enacted—is remove all the mimimum wage legislation that they are able to remove, and refuse to support the idea of minimum wage legislation to guarantee minimum earning levels for all families. Instead, they remove all the safety nets at the bottom to force people into lower and lower levels of employment at lower and lower levels of remuneration, and indeed to subsidise employers to pay low wages. That is all that the Government seem to understand.

The other side of this is the increase in the time necessary for someone to re-qualify for benefit, from 13

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

weeks to 26. That adds up to roughly 50,000 more people being denied benefit, at a saving of £100 million for the Government. Why does the Minister not come clean at the outset and say that the purpose of the Bill is to save the Treasury £100 million—that the Government are stacking up the savings so that they can give bigger tax handouts in the next Budget to people who simply do not need them, showing disgraceful personal profligacy in a society riddled with debt, poverty and misery as a result of the Government's economic strategy?

I have looked through the Bill carefully. Some of it is ominous and nasty, particularly clauses 7, 8 and 9. Will the Minister tell us exactly what is meant by the reference in clause 12 to housing benefit money being withheld from local authorities that do not provide suitable information to central Government in the form in which it is requested? The clause may be perfectly innocent, but I doubt it. I suspect that this has something to do with further demands on local authorities related to rent levels or tenancies. I should be grateful if the Minister could explain.

I should also be grateful if the Minister could tell us why the Bill does not deal with the problems that have arisen from previous legislation. Many of us take seriously the operation of the social security system, and a number of reports have been produced which show in devastating detail the way in which DSS offices are run—the shortage of staff, the high turnover and the poor standard of service that the majority of claimants receive. The Minister has expressed his anxiety about that, and there have been some improvements; but there is a long way to go. Matters are not helped by continuous rumours and reports of the threatened closure of social security offices. If the DSS office in my constituency closes, it will result not only in the loss of a major employer of predominantly young workers but in increased inefficiency in the provision of services to the people in my community.

The attendance allowance scheme needs careful examination. I had a meeting this morning with the local branch of Mencap in my constituency. There are disturbing reports from a number of people with severely handicapped children or adults for whom they care who have been refused attendance allowances by the DSS. Those allowances have unfortunately been refused in a way which causes great hardship to those concerned.

Finally, I should point out that the social fund is becoming so restricted and tight that every office seems to be underspending, be it grant or loan, because the Government want it that way, so that in future years the social fund can be cut. There is not just an underspending on a lower figure but a gross underspending on a figure that was already too low because social fund officers are refusing benefits that are needed. The social fund needs to be expanded and opened up to help with removal expenses for workers buying tools or work clothes for new jobs for work related travel expenses or for crisis loans to cover workers starting new jobs who are without money for up to a month.

So many things could have been included in the Bill, but all it seeks to do is to punish the unemployed for being unemployed, to punish the poor for being poor and to seek this great retribution by getting them off the register and out of the Government's hair. We shall oppose the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation, and I appeal for the co-operation of those hon. Members who are called during the next two hours.

7.12 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I cannot help feeling that the opposition to the work test for unemployment benefit is rather synthetic. The shrill tones of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) seemed to be over the top. I cannot really believe that she has so mellowed in her attitude to the community charge that she now regards this measure as worse than the reform of local government finance.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) seems to believe that all people in Islington should obtain jobs in Islington and not look at the wider London market, which provides a rather better picture than the labour market in Islington.

About one third of the unemployed in Britain are in London, the south-east and East Anglia, and in all those parts of the country it is possible to find a job. One has only to walk down the high street to see the jobs on offer. They almost fall out of the shops. It is difficult to see why anyone should object to that test being applied strongly in those parts of the country. I accept the Opposition's arguments that in other parts of the country where jobs are not readily available, which is still, unfortunately, the case in some towns, although it is not universally true in the north any more, it will be necessary to administer the scheme with more local sensitivity. I fully accept the assurances of my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that that will be the case.

I also welcome the clause that deals with the reform of the war widows pensions committee arrangements. I like the idea of fewer committees and of strengthened representation for the war widows. I put in another plea. I hope, that when war widows' pensions are next uprated, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will argue for a better than average uprating. War widows have not had a particularly good deal over the years since the two world wars. The Government have been trying to rectify that, but more could be done and it would be a nice touch if in next year's uprating war widows were given a better than average increase in recognition of their particular circumstances.

I wish mainly to occupy myself by looking at the proposals on occupational pensions. We have before us a proposal born of a Brussels directive and initiative which talks about the applications of the surpluses within occupational pension schemes by way of levelling up all schemes to the best practice whether it be for men or women so that the other sex can enjoy best practice. That is unexceptionable. In many ways it is welcome, but we must understand that we are talking either about an increased cost for employers or about the allocation of surpluses that still remain in funds thanks to years of good investment performance since 1981, despite understandable moves by the Treasury to limit the extent of the surpluses.

I hope that in Committee the Government will consider one or two other matters that could be dealt with when considering how to apply those surpluses. A far worse problem for members of occupational pension schemes than the imbalance in provisions between men and women lies in the indexation provisions. I am pleased to say that the Government introduced the first indexation measures

governing occupational schemes. They were right to see that occupational pension schemes could not hope to match all inflation at whatever rate and in whatever circumstances. They could be driven into bankruptcy.

But the first step—I hope that it was the first step—was a modest one and I should like to think that the Government are now contemplating a second step to increase the level of protection from inflation for those in occupational pension schemes. It is a cruel deceit if someone reaches retirement age, obtains an occupational pension at two thirds or one half of their retirement salary, and 10 years later discovers that it has been eroded by inflation because the indexation does not match the level of inflation that has been experienced.

Another problem that does grave damage to people's rights in occupational pension schemes arises when a person transfers from one scheme to another. It is wrong for some people in the occupational pensions industry to imply that a person who frequently changes his job is in some way unreliable and so should not be given protection by his occupational scheme. Again, I welcome the fact that the Government have taken steps to deal with that problem.

All hon. Members should support the Government. After all, we are inveterate job changers. Since the days of the younger Pitt is has been a rare occurrence to come here straight from school, so, by definition, hon. Members have to have a job first. If they are unfortunate, their rights will be removed when they enter the House because of the transfer arrangements from their outgoing occupational pension scheme.

Mr. Leighton: Does Conservative Central Office count as a proper job?

Mr. Redwood: I am sure that it does. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have never worked for Central Office. I had a proper job in the commercial sector before I came here. I am not talking about my situation but about the situation of other people who have found when changing jobs that their occupational pension rights have been removed or limited by the way in which the actuarial calculations are made.

That relates only to final salary pension schemes. I welcome the moves towards money purchase that the Government have rightly instituted and which will remove all those problems, but many people will wish to remain members of a large number of final salary schemes. I hope that when looking at the application of the surpluses the Government will once again consider whether existing transfer arrangements are working properly or whether people moving from one job to another may in some ways be let down by the calculations of actuarial value and whether they are also finding it difficult to take the value out when they wish to move to a personal portable pension which may provide a better guarantee for them in terms of the amount of cash that is theirs.

Finally, I want to talk a little about the problems that arise in implementing the EEC's views on equality between men and women in the state pension scheme. I believe that the Government were looking favourably at a scheme which would involve a decade of retirement, and I recommend that to them. If we offered people choice whereby men or women could decide when, between the ages of 60 and 70, they wanted to retire, we would begin to make progress.

Employees would be offered choice subject to the rules of their employers, and agreement and negotiation with them. If they decided to retire at 60, they would receive lower pensions based on lower contributions. If they retired at 70, they would receive higher pensions, but, under the law of averages, it would be paid for fewer years.

It would be possible to calculate a system with no net cost to the Treasury. The problem would be that, in order to balance the fund, we would have to make worse the terms under which some women enjoy pension rights. It is not right for the Government to take away women's pension rights when they are in their 40s or 50s, and anticipating their retirement at 60. That would be a harsh blow. I would recommend an extended period of transition. Steps could be taken to balance the scheme for younger men and women. The group of women who had already made substantial contributions over the years and who would be offended by the sharp removal or reduction of their rights could pass through the system on an unequal basis.

I hope that, in the long term, the Government will move towards equality in the state scheme for men and women and will introduce the element of choice—on a no-cost basis if they wish—by allowing people to retire when they choose. That choice would be with the agreement of their employers, and their pensions would be adjusted in relation to their contribution record.

I shall support the Bill, but I hope that it will go further on occupational pensions.

7.22 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak, but that gratitude does not extend to hon. Members who have debased the office of Government, abused the stewardship with which they were entrusted, and used the protection of the House to steal from the poor.

The attitude and actions of those hon. Members have realised the fable of Pandora's box, as millions of impoverished people suffer poor health, inadequate diets, lack of housing and the rigours of the cold. Every age group is affected, and no one is sacrosant.

The Bill ignores the massive problems facing young people under the age of 18. They will suffer in order that the Government can continue to give handouts to their wealthy friends. The Government are driven by the need to make cheeseparing economies that hurt the poorest and most vulnerable.

In "Oliver Twist", the workhouse governors carped at the cost of keeping the orphan inmates, while those governors lived in the lap of luxury. How eager they were to see the children in their care farmed out to an employer who was more concerned to exploit their labour than provide a proper apprenticeship. The parallel is uncomfortably close to those 16 and 17-year-olds of today who no longer live at home and are now required to accept YTS placements if they wish to obtain the wherewithal to live. For many—the most disadvantaged—a scheme that was designed to be voluntary now has the compulsion of a prison sentence.

The Prime Minister is known to be a great admirer of the Victorians. Presumably, therefore, she believes that children—she includes 16 and 17-year-olds—must inevitably submit to the will of their parents. The Victorians

[Mr. John Hughes]

were brutally indifferent to young people. They were brutal in their treatment of their own children. The homes of the wealthiest were often places of misery and torment.

That tradition of domestic violence has survived today. Young people are often forced to leave home because of intolerance or the threat of violence—either physical violence or sexual harassment.

For the Prime Minister, as for the Victorians, those problems do not exist, or, if they do, it is only because the benefit system encourages them. The Prime Minister and the Government are blind to the fact—it has been reiterated by every agency concerned with the young homeless—that the pressure on some young people is so great that they leave home whatever the consequences.

The Government's policies force that most vulnerable group of young people who, at that traumatic time, need help and support, into grinding poverty. There is often a risk that they will have to commit offences to obtain even the most basic means of survival. An illustration of that occurred in Coventry, my own town. A young man, on his way to an appointment with a benefit advice agency, was arrested by the police for the theft of a loaf of bread. That young person may have been forced to steal that loaf of bread through sheer desperation.

One young person on a youth training scheme had to pay £10·50 for rent and rates and £3 towards the cost of travelling to the YTS placement, which was some distance away. His total travelling cost per week was £10. That person was left with only £16 from the £29·50 allowance. From that he had to pay £2·20 for a prescription for a chest infection, which under income support rules would have been free. From the remaining £13·80 per week that young person had to pay for fuel bills, food, toiletries and clothing. He had no proper shoes for winter and no proper coat. He was forced to leave home. He said:

"My father and I had such violent rows before I left that it nearly caused the break-up of my parents' marriage."

In a similar case, a young person was left with only £12·50 a week because a card meter had been installed to pay for a previous electricity bill. The first £3 per week went towards that bill and the standing charge before any electricity was provided.

Circumstances can be even more difficult for young people who are not on youth training schemes. All that is available for those youngsters is a bridging allowance of £15 per week for up to eight weeks in a year. It ignores the fact that YTS placements are subject to selection by the employer. Employers select according to their prejudice or preference and not according to social need. That reinforces the discrimination against black people and women, particularly pregnant women.

For example, a 17-year-old woman who was five and a half months pregnant had her income support stopped on 12 September. Since then she has been receiving £15 a week bridging allowance. She had been living with her aunt, but there were other people in the house and she had to leave to take a council bedsit. She had no furniture, no bedding, no cooker and no utensils, but she was not eligible for a community care grant because she was not on income support. The flat was all-electric and she had to pay by card meter at a rate of £6 per week. She was not receiving free milk because since April free milk tokens can be awarded only to claimants on income support. From her allowance she was supposed to find £3 towards her rates and water rates. She could not obtain a YTS placement because she was within 11 weeks of her confinement. The Secretary of State was asked to use his discretion to top up her £15 a week allowance to the income support level, but he refused on the grounds that she was not experiencing "severe hardship".

That woman was well over halfway through her pregnancy, which is a time when most women would be experiencing extreme tiredness. She had a difficult pregnancy. For the sake of both her and the unborn child, she should have been eating a healthy diet rich in tissue-building proteins and containing a proper balance of vitamins and minerals. Such food is costly. The Secretary of State made his decision not to top up her allowance and it was a judgment against which there was no appeal.

Those are not isolated incidents. They are part of a pattern of exclusions which begins by excluding people from the unemployment figures. It excludes people from the opportunity of earning a livelihood, from decent housing and from having hope.

There is the case of a young woman who was unable to live with her parents. Her situation was so desperate that she was admitted to a hostel run by the Coventry young homeless project. Because she was in receipt of a bridging allowance awaiting a YTS placement, she was not entitled to assistance in paying the cost of her accommodation. She is awaiting a decision by the Secretary of State to see whether hers is a case of severe hardship.

There is the case of a woman, estranged from her parents and living alone for over a year, who has not managed, despite considerable efforts, to obtain a YTS placement, and her bridging allowance has now expired. Consider the case of a young woman whose parents are in receipt of income support. They have thrown her out of the house saying that they cannot afford to keep her. She too is awaiting the Secretary of State's decision.

The problem is obvious. It is obvious to television journalists from watchdog organisations who have interviewed a young woman who left home and was forced to beg on the streets and whose own father had advised her to "go on the game". Does the Secretary of State believe that that young woman left home prematurely?

The problem is obvious to foreign observers and to the royal family. Prince Edward was forced to comment on precisely this aspect of the Government's legislation. He pointed out that young people such as I have described were a prey to pimps and pushers and he said that legislation was depriving charities which had been set up to aid the homeless of the ability to provide temporary homes. In other words, they were being deprived of funds because of the small print.

If one is on income support or YTS allowance, one is entitled to an allowance of up to £70 a week to cover a hostel charge. But if one is not on such benefit—if one is in receipt of a bridging allowance—one is a sort of non-person; the Secretary of State does no recognise such a person. The problems are apparent to everyone, but are ignored by the Government, who hide their penny-pinching behind a smokescreen of sanctimonious rhetoric. There is now a Government tradition that every Minister responsible for social security camouflages the sweeping savagery of benefit changes. Frozen payments and cuts are concealed behind a multitude of conditions, qualifications

and subsections in the intricate, convoluted, crooked path that each Minister pursues in bringing about changes which completely disregard the suffering that they involve.

I recently attended a dance organised by the transport union in my locality. A young disabled woman was dancing, enjoying herself as much as any other dancer. She was able to join in and have fun only because she had been provided with a chair which cost £3,000. That chair had not been provided by the Government. They prefer to give the equivalent of 52 chairs a week to Sir Ralph Halpern of Burton as a tax handout. That reflects the priorities of this Government.

7.32 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): We must not forget as we discuss this new Bill that the Government are spending a record amount, over £50 billion, on providing financial support and aid to the less well-off, the sick and the disabled. The constant carping and humbug from Opposition Members should be seen in that context. Social security has become a contentious issue in the last two years, but I must remind Members in all parts of the House that no one political party has a monopoly on compassion or caring. We are all concerned and wish to alleviate hardship among the poor, the sick and the disabled.

Where we differ from Opposition Members is that we believe that policies can be implemented to bring maximum help to those in the greatest need. I would point out as delicately as I can—so as not to cause synthetic howls of rage from Labour Members—that any discussion about how to apportion the record amounts of money now available for social security would be academic but for the fact that the Chancellor's economic policies have ensured the creation of wealth and the generation of tax revenue in such a way that public spending on social security has increased year by year in real terms.

On a less contentious note, I congratulate the Secretary of State on honouring the pledge he gave last November to raise the upper age limit for mobility allowance from 75 to 80. I am sure that that will be warmly welcomed by all, particularly as it is a benefit paid on top of other income and is non-taxable.

I shall concentrate my remarks on probably the most important part of the Bill—clauses 7, 9 and 10—which deals with the "actively seeking work" requirement for receiving unemployment benefit and disqualification for refusing employment. These clauses are long overdue, for it is ludicrous that taxpayers' money should be spent to support those who wilfully refuse employment. Why should an able-bodied person who makes no effort to find work draw unemployment benefit simply by signing on once a fortnight? That is clearly nonsense and I welcome the fact that, when the Bill becomes law, an unemployment benefit claimant will be required to show that he or she is actively seeking work.

I am also glad that the Bill will provide regulations setting out examples of what steps a claimant may take to show that he or she is seeking work. I predict that, as a result of this legislation, the unemployment figures will decrease further and will to a degree melt away like snow in summer because a cynical minority—and I accept that it is only a small minority—will no longer be able to exploit the existing rules.

I strongly recommend those who disbelieve that last statement to read the London labour market report which was published last year and to which other hon. Members have referred. It graphically proves my point. While the situation in London is not exactly the same as that in other parts of the country, we must remember that the majority of the population of England lives in the south-east.

The report graphically shows that

"there is a wide range of vacancies which could be filled by many of those who are unemployed. Many of the unemployed have educational and training qualifications and a surprisingly large minority have high level qualifications. At the same time, many of the vacancies do not require special qualifications or experience and could be filled by unemployed people witout established skills."

The final summary of the main findings of the report states unequivocally that unemployed people need to look more intensively and effectively for work. The findings show that, in the summer of 1988, there were 288,000 claimants in London and 150,000 vacant jobs. The co-existence of high levels of vacancies and unemployment could not be explained primarily in terms of a mismatch between the skills and experience of unemployed people and the type of vacancies available.

One quarter of the vacancies were for managerial and professional jobs; one quarter were for clerical jobs; 17 per cent. were for skilled or semi-skilled manual work; 18 per cent. were for retail and catering jobs and 14 per cent. were for unskilled manual work. At least one third required no previous knowledge or experience.

The report shows that many longer-term unemployed people in London are, in any case, well equipped to fill jobs which require experience or qualifications. Nearly 10 per cent. of those interviewed had previously held a managerial or professional job and 25 per cent. had held a skilled or semi-skilled manual job. Nearly 10 per cent. had a degree and over 50 per cent. had some sort of academic or vocational qualification.

It is significant, as the Secretary of State said, that 27 per cent. of the unemployed people interviewed had not looked for work in the previous week and that 45 per cent. of the group had not looked for work in the preceding three weeks. Nearly 5 per cent. of those interviewed had never looked for work since becoming unemployed. While four out of five people looking for work claimed to look at advertisements in newspapers at least once a week, only 55 per cent. of them visited their local jobcentres at least once a week.

Those figures show that many claimants, cushioned by an over-generous state, show a lack of intensity and effort in actively seeking work. First, it should be pointed out that some longer-term unemployed people are liable to lose touch with the labour market. That results in a lower level of motivation and therefore a limited job search.

Secondly, some unemployed people have become reconciled to being out of work and pursue or develop interests which enable them to use their time productively through leisure activities, voluntary work or study and thus dull their desire or willingness to seek work actively.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burns: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I am very short of time.

Thirdly, there is the category of those who are claiming benefit but are also working. I am convinced that the black economy is a factor in determining the lack of job search by some claimants. There is no point in burying one's head in the sand and pretending that that problem does not

[Mr. Burns]

exist. Hon. Members do not have to simply take my word for it. The Departments of Employment and Social Security are equally convinced that there is a problem. That is why the Government have cracked down on dole fiddlers by markedly increasing the number of investigators. As a result of their work last year a record £65 million was saved for the taxpayers, 90,000 people withdrew their claim to benefit and 4,000 were prosecuted.

Part of the Bill attacks the very heart of state-subsidised indolence for a small minority. It will provide a powerful incentive for people to seek work and release valuable financial resources that can then be properly targeted on the genuinely needy, the sick and the disabled. For those reasons, I strongly support the Bill and look forward to the day when it receives Royal Assent.

7.41 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): During the speech of the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) there was a little discussion about literacy. However, he also displayed a problematic control of numeracy. He said that not many Opposition Members were present and that showed a lack of interest. At that time, there were 21 hon. Members on the Government Benches and 16 hon. Members on the Opposition Benches. I consider that that reflects the composition of the House.

I do not believe that the non-attendance of hon. Members in any way reflects a lack of interest in the Bill. As has been said, it affects us all in one way or another and we are concerned about it. Therefore, I am pleased to have been called to speak, despite the fact that the legislation generally does not apply to Northern Ireland. That means that there will be an Order in Council when we may be allowed to talk for an hour or so but will be unable to affect or change the legislation that will come before us on that occasion.

The Bill affects Northern Ireland. I do not doubt that in every community there are those who are workshy. But a young constituent of mine came to London and had employment in London. Then, because the landlord of the house in which he was living wanted to claim grants to upgrade the premises, he was put out and could not find alternative accommodation. Ultimately, he had to leave his job here and return to the unemployment register in Northern Ireland. Another constituent has been unemployed for three years. He has taken Government training courses, and on each occasion he has discovered that that affects his income support grant and he loses out by going on Government training courses to equip him for the job market.

Does the motivation behind Government thinking stem from the reply I received some months ago saying that the largest number of long-term unemployed is found in the south-east? Has the judgment of issues there, for whatever reason, been translated into an overall countrywide and national approach that will have an adverse affect on many people in regions where it is not possible to find work?

I wish to take up a point made by the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). He mentioned those who had developed side issues or other interests. I understand what he meant when he said that they may not be looking for jobs with more remuneration, but we are living in an age when there will not be full employment, and there is a tremendous need for people to use their spare time in a voluntary capacity to serve the community. We should not in any way discourage such work.

I welcome the Bill's proposals and I have tried to figure out how they might apply to Northern Ireland. The argument is that people are not looking for work. However, under impending legislation for Northern Ireland, a person is not allowed to go knocking at firms' doors and employers are not allowed to employ people who look for work in that way. They must advertise and carry out selection procedures. People are discouraged from looking for work in that way.

This morning, before leaving home I heard a short excerpt from a programme on BBC Northern Ireland. A local expert on social security was asked about the problem of take-up of income support and other grants. She said that she understood that the form in Northern Ireland is simpler than the form in Great Britain, but that nonetheless it was the first hurdle that applicants had to get over before receiving benefit. The Disability Income Group put that forward as one reason why there is not greater take-up of mobility allowance. One of the Government's obligations in the Bill is to simplify forms and procedures so that the people on whom they wish to target benefit genuinely receive it.

I have no objection to encouraging anyone who is workshy to seek work. In the depression in the 1930s, my father worked as a labourer on the railways for more than a year before he could get back to his own trade. I am not minimising the need to encourage some folk to seek work. Nonetheless, some people have been unemployed for many years for reasons beyond their control and we have to acknowledge that, even with massive retraining, some of them will never be equipped to do the work that they are mentally and physically capable of doing. They may have gone soft, they may not be capable of intellectual pursuits, they may be better suited to physical pursuits, or appropriate work may not be available to them.

In the time that remains, I should like to put on record, the fact that I welcome the extension of the mobility allowance. However, I draw the Government's attention to the lack of take-up and urge them positively to encourage it. I wonder whether the Government accept the criticisms of the campaign for equal state pension ages that they have ducked the issue again. I press upon them the encouragement of their own Back Benchers, who urged them to consider it. There are professions in which a man retiring at 60 will have a life expectancy of anything up to 15 years, but if he continues until 65 he will have a life expectancy in retirement of two years. In dealing with equal rights, we have to balance those issues.

Finally, I raise the issue of the lack of information. I understand from the recently published audit report on the DHSS in Northern Ireland that regional management information offices were created which seemed to create a fair amount of employment for that part of the Civil Service. However, since 1985 they have not come up with any dramatic figures, other than the escalating cost of keeping their people in jobs.

I am puzzled about whether we are tackling the problem from the right angle, but I am also puzzled about whether the Government have the statistics to guide them. I regret to say that, in September 1988, I received a letter from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which stated:

"As your second question about publication of low income statistics has implications for Great Britain, we have had to consult with the Department of Social Security before responding on the Northern Ireland dimension. I shall write to you again about this as soon as possible."

It is now 10 January 1989, and even allowing for the Christmas break, it seems that there is a problem of communication as well as one relating to the statistics that would guide us to deal with the real problems that affect our people.

According, while welcoming some of the Bill, since we are excluded in principle, my colleagues will vote against it tonight.

7.50 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). We are all pleased that unemployment in Northern Ireland is decreasing, although it is still high. I believe that it is now below that in Eire, but it is twice as high as the percentage in Great Britain and must cost United Kingdom taxpayers many hundreds of millions of pounds because of the high level of benefits and the lower level of the operation of the economy there. I hope, and am quite sure, that the Government's measures will continue to work in the right direction in improving the economy of Northern Ireland.

I very much welcome the Bill. There have been some excellent speeches from Conservative Members but, I regret, some confused speeches and interventions from the Opposition. We have heard some extraordinary statements. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) tried to make out that the Government were promoting low wages, at a time when real take-home earnings are rising at a record rate. How can one make such a totally inconsistent statement—that the Government are promoting low wages when wages are far higher than they were when the Labour party was in government?

Mr. Battle *rose*—

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) give way on that point, because he has insulted me?

Mr. Thurnham: In a moment.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that the Bill punishes people. When the Labour party was in power, there were far more prosecutions for malingering. If we go back several years—one has to go back a long time to find a time when the Labour party was in power—prosecutions for malingering were running at over 20,000 per year. That was in the early 1970s and the figure had been 28,000 per year previously. The small handful of prosecutions now shows that this Government are not punishing people in the way that the Labour Government did.

Ms. Short *rose*—

Mr. Thurnham: Yes, I shall give way in a moment.

We have also heard that no work is available. I must draw the attention of Opposition Members to the great successes that job clubs are achieving. They are having a positive outcome for two thirds of the people who go to them. There are now over 200 job clubs in the north-west, and I am glad to say that six are in Bolton. Over half the people who go to job clubs come out with a job. Therefore, I do not see how Opposition Members can say that no jobs are available.

Ms. Short: I should like to respond briefly to the hon. Gentleman's insult. He has obviously not desegregated the figures on the growth in wage levels. If he did so, he would see that, for the bottom 20 per cent., the growth is below average and, relatively, those people have been getting significantly worse off for a number of years. I invite the hon. Gentleman to look at the figures in detail.

Mr. Thurnham: There is no doubt that the greatest cause of poverty is unemployment. Only the Opposition could want unemployment rather than people getting into jobs and on to the earnings ladder so that they have a chance to increase their earnings. It is this Government who have created 1 million extra jobs.

Although the Bill is concerned mainly with unemployment benefits, it relates also to benefits for other groups. In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) touched on the question of widows' benefits. I should like to remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that I went to see my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security about two widows in my constituency who I feel have been harshly affected. I believe that about 1,000 widows in the country as a whole have been harshly affected by the changes made last April to the conditions of widows who were just under the age of 45 and who had children who were just coming up to 18.

If my right hon. Friend the Chancellor finds that he has a small amount of money to give away in the forthcoming Budget, perhaps he could do something for that small number of widows who have been harshly affected and who, if they were to remain unmarried for the rest of their lives, would lose over £10,000. Although their chances of remarrying are significant, at a modest cost my right hon. Friend could do something to ameliorate the harshness of the circumstances in which that small number of widows have found themselves.

We also have the opportunity to review the working of the mobility allowance. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that these changes are an interim measure. I shall be interested to know what he has in mind for beyond them. I have had to campaign strongly for a small number of mobility allowance cases in my constituency. The great point about the mobility allowance is that, once it has been granted, it should not be taken away except with the greatest possible thought. I am pleased that we have been able to extend it for those aged 75 to 80, although I wonder why we cannot extend it for life. This measure only puts off the problem for another five years because such people will have the allowance removed when they reach the age of 80.

The allowance affects only a small number of people at the moment, but it is reckoned that, by the end of the century, the 500 who receive the benefit now will rise to about 60,000. Obviously, the Government must do some thinking about the mobility allowance. We should consider whether we can replace it with a different sort of benefit altogether so as to help people to get out and about who otherwise would not be able to do so. The latest figures from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys show—at least as I read them—the number of people who receive various benefits combined. I do not

[Mr. Thurnham]

know, for example, how many people who receive mobility allowance also receive attendance allowance. We should look at the workings of the whole scheme.

The Government have an excellent record on the payment of benefits to disabled people. Mobility allowance alone has risen in cash terms from £79 million in 1979 to £650 million this year. In real terms, that is an increase of 400 per cent. The figures for other benefits that are paid to disabled people show similarly large increases. The total figures are well worth looking at. The figures given to me by the Library show that, for this year, benefits for disabled people total £7·5 billion—a rise in cash terms from not much more than £2 billion in 1979. That shows the most enormous increase in payments to disabled people by this Government and shows which side of the House is helping disabled people, by creating an economy that can afford to make such payments.

The Bill relates primarily to the unemployed and to those who are seeking work. It is worth reminding ourselves that, in Japan, the definition of an unemployed person is somebody who has looked for work in the past week. Unemployment in Japan is currently only 2·5 per cent. and has decreased from a level of 3 per cent. two years ago when I was a member of the Select Committee on Employment and we visited Japan. Therefore, despite a strong currency, the unemployment rate there has dropped.

An interesting study was carried out by Professor Layard some years ago, although I do not agree with all his views. He looked at the effects of separating benefit offices and jobcentres and showed how, in the old days of labour exchanges, somebody who had been visiting regularly was selected and given priority when a job was going and was told to take the job and not to go back. Those were the days when there were prosecutions for malingering if people did not take a job. We should bear in mind exactly how the system used to work when looking at the changes that we are now bringing in.

I welcome the Bill and look forward to its implementation. I am sure that it will be considered carefully in Committee, including the question of how the "actively seeking work" test will be applied to disabled people. I am sure that the Bill will be of great benefit to all when it reaches the statute book.

7.59 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) appeared to suggest that low pay did not exist or, if it did exist, it was not a problem, because it was merely at the bottom rung of the ladder of earnings. I believe that his remarks were both ill-informed and insensitive and they show the extent to which any understanding of the problems of the poor does not exist in the minds of Conservative Members. That is the real reason for debating such a niggardly, disgraceful proposal as the one which is the centrepiece of the Bill. I refer, of course, to clauses 7, 9 and 10, which are recognised, even by Conservative Members, as the most important part of the Bill. We are told that those clauses are meant to tighten up the criteria for assessing whether a claimant's unemployment is genuinely involuntary.

I admit that I find it difficult to take seriously the phrase "unemployment which is genuinely involuntary", because it suggests to me that there is such a thing as mass unemployment that is genuinely voluntary, which is what the Minister appeared to suggest when he opened the debate. He referred to as many as 360,000 people who choose to be unemployed. In fact, he was quite pleased when he told the House that there were as many as 360,000 people who choose to be unemployed. No doubt he will be equally pleased to say that the 2·9 million who are unemployed merely represent three times as many people as chose to be unemployed under Labour. That is a vindication of the Government's commitment to extend choice throughout the United Kingdom.

The idea that hundreds of thousands of people volunteer to subsist on £32·75 a week unemployment benefit, or £33·40 a week income support, is, of course, completely mad. There would not be many hon. Members who would volunteer to live on £32·75 a week. Indeed, after the salary increases awarded to hon. Members, we now earn the princely sum of £66 a day—£462 a week. Even those princely sums are not enough for some Conservative Members. They become part-time Members of Parliament, who sell themselves in the City of London as consultants or directors, and some earn as much as £100,000 a year outwith their parliamentary duties. One hundred thousand pounds is not enough for them, but £32·75 a week is too much for 360,000 unemployed people.

I find it deeply dishonest, even morally objectionable, that we should have a spectacle here tonight of wealthy men—they are mostly wealthy men—sitting in moral judgment on whether the poor people deserve the paltry sums which are given to them by the State on which to subsist from week to week. If nothing else, I hope that personal embarrassment will prevent many Conservative Members going through the Lobby tonight in support of this disgraceful Bill. However, I fear that personal embarrassment will not come into it and that hundreds of them will troop through the Lobby in support of a proposal that denies £32·75 a week to thousands of poor people—the very sum that such hon. Members would spend on a meal out with their wives or husbands.

The regulations are meant to test whether claimants are actively seeking work. The offence to refuse suitable employment without due cause no longer exists, but from now on just to refuse any employment without just cause is reason enough to stop someone's benefit. It appears to be an extension of the treatment which has been meted out to 16 and 17-year-olds by making the youth training scheme compulsory.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment wrote to me recently saying that YTS was not compulsory and that in fact youngsters have a choice—they can either take it or leave it. Of course, if they leave it, they will be denied any benefit or income whatsoever. What the Minister failed to understand is that, unlike him and his family, thousands of youngsters belong to families who do not know what it is to be comfortably well off and who need every single penny in their household budgets if they are to survive. If any Minister threatens to remove a youngster's £19·40 a week benefit, or his £25 a week YTS allowance, effectively he is removing choice from that family altogether.

In the same way as the YTS has become compulsory, by this Bill low-paid employment will too. If we take away £30-odd from people who are living in poverty, we remove

all choice from them, because they must accept whatever job is on offer for fear of losing their benefits. I believe that that is the real reason for the proposal.

Far from tackling the dependency culture or encouraging the enterprise culture, which we hear so much about from Conservative Members, the proposal will worsen the desperate situation of low-paid employment in the United Kingdom. The Government cannot expect any other commentary upon them other than that they are colluding with unscrupulous employers to worsen the critical problem of low pay throughout the economy, which of course, especially affects Scotland.

We have heard already a reference to an analysis of the London labour market. I shall draw the House's attention to another report which was issued recently by the Low Pay Unit and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, entitled "Sweatshop Scotland". The report presents disturbing evidence of a decline in the pay and conditions of many of Scotland's poorest workers. It also exposes the practices of certain unscrupulous employers, who are paying illegal wages. It shows that the Wages Act 1986 in Scotland has caused the wages and conditions of many Scottish workers to fall, without any corresponding increase in employment in the sectors affected. That is in spite of the fact that the Government pushed that Act through on the argument that, if wages came down and conditions worsen, employment would increase in those sectors. It shows, too, that, while these employers continue to pay illegal wage rates, the Government continue to turn a blind eye to their activities. There have been virtually no prosecutions of such employers.

I shall refer quickly to three examples of conditions of employment in Scotland. The first is a video shop in Clydeside, where the manageress, aged 20, is working 66 hours a week for £2 an hour—and not a penny of overtime. Secondly, there is a shop assistant in Argyllshire, aged 19, who works 78 hours a week. She does not receive a pay slip, but her net pay is £47 a week. Thirdly, there is a shoe shop in central Glasgow, where a 16-year-old female is working a 30-hour week for £1·44 an hour, with no paid holidays in her first year. Those are the kind of conditions already existing in Scotland and, once the Bill is passed, those conditions will spread even further.

Such defence as once existed against those conditions are being steadily eroded by the Government through the weakening of the wages councils, and probably their eventual abolition, as well as their failure to prosecute employers who fall foul of wages councils' regulations. The report rightly warns that a new servant class is emerging in Scotland, and the Government must accept their share of the responsibility for creating the conditions in which that has occurred.

The Chancellor recently described as poor those who had to live on half average earnings of £107 a week. How would he describe the woman who is working 78 hours a week for £47? She is taking home less than half the wages of what the Chancellor calls the poor. I suppose that one of the Government's successes has been to add new dimensions to the meaning of poverty in Britain today.

We are told that the three new clauses are expected to reduce expenditure by £100 million in a full year. Of course, that will be achieved by forcing tens of thousands into low-paid employment. What about the black economy—the tax avoiders and evaders, whom experts believe to be worth some 5 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product or, in other words, £24,000 million a year? Why do the Government not turn their attention to those instead of the unemployed? Why do they not have special task forces, White Papers and Bills to take on the tax avoiders and evaders instead of taking on the unemployed? Why are the rich not pressurised into paying what is due rather than the poor fiddled out of what is their right? Of course it is par for the course that the Government should choose to pick on the poor and unemployed. The poor have long despaired of any justice at the hands of the Government.

In 1979, unemployment was a terrible experience for anyone, but 10 years on, in 1989, it is much more so because of the direct actions of the Government. Their actions have led to the abolition of earnings-related benefit, the decline in the relative value of unemployment benefit and what it can buy for the claimant, the narrowing of eligibility for benefit whether through the Fowler reviews or the availability for work tests, and the Bill we are discussing.

The unemployed have become the Cinderellas of the welfare state. Their position has deteriorated dramatically without any of the outbursts of public indignation that have accompanied attacks on the Health Service or child benefits. One of the speakers at the annual conference of the Child Poverty Action Group, Professor Julian Le Grand, commented on why that should be so. He believes that the primary factor is the role of the middle class. He argued that the middle class had a substantial interest in various key areas of the welfare state—both as users and as employers. The middle class could and would be mobilised in defence of those key areas, but unemployment is not one of them. In the main, unemployment affects the working class and the poorer members of our society. That is precisely why the Government have been at their most oppressive, unjust and vindictive in their attacks on the unemployed.

No doubt the Government have made the calculation that the unemployed can be safely discounted because the electoral arithmetic is such that they can be elected without the support of most unemployed people and even without seeking to concern themselves with giving them justice. It must be said that, so far, they have been proved right. But they are right only in so far as they enjoy minority support among the electors. Between 57 and 58 per cent. of United Kingdom voters and 76 per cent. of Scottish voters have rejected the Government's class-ridden policies and their ongoing war against the unemployed.

The Prime Minister and the Government have been able to sustain themselves in office simply because of the divided nature of the majority Opposition. The Government cannot count on that state of division continuing indefinitely, nor can they count on their supporters continuing to turn a blind eye to the attacks that the Government are making on the poor and the unemployed of our country.

The poor cannot look to the Government for justice, but they can look towards the majority of the people uniting together at the next general election to deliver justice to them by removing the Government from office.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I know that Mr. Speaker imposed the 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock, but looking at the number of hon. Members seeking to catch my eye, it might

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

be sensible to take a more relaxed view, although, of course, that must not be interpreted as an invitation to make lengthy speeches.

8.12 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak under the more relaxed conditions. It gives me an opportunity to reply to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). I do not believe that there are Conservative Members who knowingly wish to disadvantage those who genuinely need help for any good reason. Let us consider the Government's record since they took power in 1979. They appreciated the structural problems that existed within the economy and the problems connected with employment training. They have steadily worked to put those matters right so that the problem of unemployment can be properly addressed.

When one considers social security one is inevitably struck by the fact that it is complex and requires practical treatment. The Bill addresses the complexities as well as the practicalities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security should note, however, that I have spoken to people who work in social security offices and in job-centres, and they have made a strong plea that they should be heard. In many cases they have to make policies, such as those outlined in the Bill, operationally sound. Before we finally commit the Bill to the statute book, I hope that Ministers will find time to talk to the front-line troops about the operational aspects of the Bill. They must make certain that it can be operated with the compassion that all sides of the House would welcome.

Clause 2 deals with the ending of the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund. I am delighted that the success of the economy, the buoyancy of incomes, and the growth of earnings have allowed the national insurance fund to yield an income above that which requires further support from the Treasury. If nothing else, it provides the opportunity for the Treasury to listen to the appeals of Social Security Ministers for additional funding to help work in other areas.

I am aware that, as we approach the end of the century, the demographic table suggests that the number of national insurance payers will decline. At present, there are 2·3 national insurance payers per claimant, but by the turn of the century, that figure will have declined to about 1·8 payers per claimant. I hope that the Bill will not be a hostage to fortune and that the national insurance fund will not run out of money.

I believe that the clauses that deal with the test for work introduce a dynamic into the efforts that people must make to find employment. It is not an occasional test, but a continuing test of the efforts that people make to seek work. Now I find it easier to support further developments of the test for work because of the other efforts that have been made to assist people back into work. Only last week I visited a number of people who had taken advantage of the Government's employment training scheme. I was struck not only by the quality of the training, but by the fact that some of the people on those schemes had been out of work for a considerable time. They had voluntarily agreed to go on the training course because they appreciated that it could lead them back into work.

Sad to say, those people who work in the various social security offices are aware of certain claimants who persistently find ways of avoiding the various tests and their implication—the eventual removal of their unemployment benefit. Many people in those offices feel a deep sense of frustration when they see genuinely able-bodied people who, for whatever reason, have chosen to ignore work and remain in receipt of benefit. The clauses answer a genuine plea from the public that the system be tightened up.

All too often it is forgotten that the taxpayer funds the system. Of the money spent by the Government, £1 out of every £3 goes towards social security. There is plenty of folklore, some with a factual basis, that suggests that there are people who have found a way around the system. The provisions of the Bill will tackle those people.

Much has been said about the black economy. That demonstrates that there are people willing to work, but not legitimately. Taxpayers who have accepted lower-paid work feel sore about people, for example those in the building trade, who do jobs on the side and pay no tax or national insurance contributions. The improvement in some of the tests of benefit will tackle that problem and will take a thorn out of the side of many working people who presently pay for the luxuries that a group, albeit a small one, enjoy.

Much effort has been put into employment training. there are posters around London at the moment advertising companies such as IBM, Sainsbury and Wimpey who make it clear that where there are no people for the jobs they will provide the right training.

The Bill introduces an element of activity into the tests to be given to those seeking unemployment benefit. I am glad that that dynamism has been introduced. Recently I spoke to a lady who was a restart counsellor. She was frustrated that she had little sanction other than bringing people back continually for further interviews when determining whether they were genuinely seeking work. I believe that clauses 7, 9 and 10 will properly address that frustration.

Clause 13 deals with transitional payments and obviously I am delighted that we are giving legal sanction to those payments, but I have to say that one of the sadnesses about the Bill is the fact that Ministers have not perhaps taken every opportunity to learn some of the lessons of the review of the 1986 Act. I felt that the Minister for Social Security gave the House a genuine reassurance that the effects of the 1986 Act would be closely monitored, but I do not want at this stage to detain the House with a series of examples about individual problems, save to say that I have come across some very difficult cases where I am certain that the transitional payment scheme was never designed to deprive people of help. Certain technicalities have come to light in the operation of these recently introduced measures and I pray that Ministers may just think it fit to use the opportunity of this Bill to address those matters.

Clause 15 is very interesting because it deals with the computerisation of the social security system, and I very much welcome that, because it begins to address some of the criticisms we have heard from the Opposition about the take-up of benefits. The one thing that the existing computerised systems of income support will do is to ensure that people get the benefit to which they are entitled, and the fact that clause 15 enables payments and

upratings to be made on computerised systems, without the need of intervention by senior civil servants in benefit offices, is to be welcomed.

But there's the rub, because inevitably computers require fewer people, and clearly some particularly well-qualified people in benefit offices are already thinking about their future in the service. It is also clear that to recruit good quality people into the social security system is becoming increasingly difficult, and while I support the technical nature of clause 15, I urge Ministers to examine the implications for personnel in the service.

Local authorities, anxious to find qualified people to implement the terms of the community charge, are already looking closely at the availability of people in social security offices who are doubting their future in the system. Many of these higher qualified staff understand the complexity of the system that we are seeking to amend, and I hope that in implementing clause 15 we will not allow good people to leave the service.

Clause 19 deals with pensions and equalising the opportunities for men and women. I warmly welcome the clause. I think that it follows up a theme that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer showed in his Budget. He recognised the growing importance of the work that women do and gave them the promise of a separate tax status. Now the social security legislation is again recognising that there should be an equal opportunity for women in respect of their pensions. I worked for a company that, unfortunately, did not have that equal opportunity for pensions.

There is one element about which I am not entirely clear. It is right to equalise opportunities, but some young girls starting work quite relish the fact that their wage, which may be low initially, does not have a subtraction from it for a company pension scheme, because it may be their intention to work for a short time and then, after marriage, to leave work altogether. For them cash flow is one of the most important things, and I hope that, in framing the regulations that will enable the equalisation to take place, the Minister for Social Security will bear that point in mind.

Certainly, for women who are looking forward to a long period of work, pensions equalisation is a vital provision which I am sure we would fully support. But I am quite certain that its passage through the House will also occasion debate about the bigger and more difficult problem about the equalisation of retirement age for the sexes.

Finally, the Bill addresses some minor provisions affecting war pensions, and in particular war pension committees. I cannot let the opportunity pass without saying that it is perhaps sad that the Bill does not address the wider subject of the pensions paid to those who have formerly served in the armed forces. I know that Ministers are aware from much lobbying and many speeches at political conferences how strongly many people feel about this subject, and I take this opportunity to press them again to keep under review, as I know they are doing with their colleagues both in their Department and in the Ministry of Defence, the whole question of officers who retired before 1973 and the pension that their widows get, compared with the more generous treatment given to those who were widowed after 1973.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have drawn attention to the fact that there is much in the Bill to commend. It is a measure which should command widespread support, and certainly I know that clauses 7, 9 and 10 will be warmly welcomed by the general public.

8.25 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I think it is noted by many commentators now that this is a Government run on the basis of image and presentation. The Department of Social Security recently put out a new logo in the shape of what seemed to be a smiling mouth, which for many people in receipt of social security benefits is proving to be the empty grin of a Cheshire cat. If image and presentation are the key—they depend upon a keen sense of the instant present that the media insists we acknowledge—if one is addicted to image and presentation, memory becomes repressed and history is suppressed.

I was amazed to hear the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) make a plea for to be the first of a number of radical reforms. He has been in this House much longer than I have—I think, throughout the whole of this Government's term of office. I am surprised that he has not noticed what has actually been going on in social security and, because of his remark, I would like to focus my comments on the background and intentions behind the Bill impression given by the Tory Members tonight is that there has been no major legislation in this area for years. I would like to ask them this: what about the great Fowler review, the "back to Beveridge" approach that this Government set in train in the last Parliament? What about the reform of social security documents published and set in motion in June 1985?

The Secretary of State stated plainly that the Bill embodies the Government's vision of the social security system. I absolutely agree. It is all of a piece I argue that it is not a question of tidying up, not just a piecemeal Bill that is catching one part of the legislation that seems to have fallen behind; it is all of a piece with the Government's approach to the economy and to social security which—add, includes the establishment of a low-wage sector within the British economy.

The Bill tries to drive those who are currently unemployed into that low-wage sector to keep it going. In the Green Paper "The Reform of Social Security" published in June 1985, there was an interesting emphasis:

> "Most people not only can but wish to make sensible provision for themselves . . . State provision . . . should not discourage self-reliance or stand in the way of individual provision and responsibility . . . While it is one of the functions of the social security system to help those who are unemployed, it is self-defeating if it creates barriers to the creation of jobs, to job mobility or to people rejoining the labour force. Clearly such obstacles exist if people believe themselves better off out of work than in work; or if employers regard the burden of national insurance as a substantial discouragement to providing jobs . . . If we wish to encourage individuals to provide for themselves, then the social security system—public and private—must not stand in the way."

The Bill continues this Government's effective repeal of the social security system. The principle is to ensure that the social security system is out of the way so that the conditions outlined in the Green Paper of June 1985 can be established. There have been three Social Security Bill while I have been a Member of Parliament. This is yet another Bill to get the social security system out of the way.

The Green Paper on the reform of social security

[Mr. John Battle]

concluded blandly

"The proposals will make it more worthwhile for individuals to work and to save."

This may not be the right debate in which to comment on people's savings, which are remarkably low. Such a comment may be more appropriate to a debate that is to take place later this week. However, the Government are now insisting on driving people into temporary, part-time and low-paid work. The Bill provides an instrument for

The Green Paper of June 1985 contained only a brief reference to the unemployed in the proposals to review the social security system. They were passed over almost in silence, despite the pleading of many groups on their behalf. I recall that my hon. Friends pleaded for assistance to be given to the long-term unemployed and their families. They got a scant response from the Government. We are entitled to ask the Minister to explain why the change in the work test was not presented as part of the Fowler reviews. Why was it kept in the background, to be slipped in piecemeal as the full proposals in the Fowler reviews are exposed year after year? I find it hard to believe the statement in the Green Paper:

"The Government's proposals are not based on a grand design for a new state system".

I believe that they are based on such a grand design.

Just before the publication of the Green Paper, in June 1985, two other Government documents were published in March by the Department of Employment. The first was a Government report entitled "Burdens on Business". It set out the terms for reducing the burden of Government regulations; PAYE, national insurance contributions, VAT, employment law, the health and safety regulations and the planning and trading standards were all to be repealed. The terms of reference of the report were:

"What are the areas in which reductions in compliance costs would make the biggest difference? What are the main obstacles to securing a substantial reduction in their costs? What areas of regulation should be amended?"

Its proposals included

"abolishing or drastically relaxing Wages Councils control over young peoples' wages which price some of them out of their jobs."

In the same month, March 1985, the Department of Employment also published a booklet entitled "The Challenge for the Nation." It was even more explicit than "Burdens on Business" and contained proposals headed "Helping the Jobs Market." It proclaimed:

"The Government has acted to ease wage rigidities . . . More realistic levels of youth pay have been encouraged by the young workers scheme and the training allowance of the YTS."

I remind the House that the young workers scheme gave employers £15 a week for every young person they were prepared to take on at a gross wage that averaged £50 a week or less. "The Challenge to the Nation" emphasised throughout that the biggest single cause of high unemployment is the failure of the job market. By that it meant that the labour market was the weak link. What this Government mean is made absolutely explicit in the introduction to that document:

"Improving the work of the labour market is particularly important. Jobs will be created to the extent that people are prepared to work at wages that employers can afford."

No reference was made to what workers and their families can afford to live on, if they are given those wages. The question was simply whether they could be channelled into the low-wage economy.

Mr. Jack: Does the hon. Gentleman not acknowledge that the Government have made strenuous efforts to help in particular those on low pay with families through the family credit system?

Mr. Battle: I shall respond later in detail to the hon. Gentleman's question. Under this Government, the people on low pay now number 9·4 million—40 per cent. of the work force, a figure that is unprecedented in recent British history. They are on wages well below what is referred to in Europe as "the decency threshhold."

Since the Fowler review there have already been two Acts dealing with social security. It was claimed during the last Session that the whole system ought to be revamped. We shall soon have further legislation to abolish the wages councils. There have already been numerous attempts, by changes in the method of calculation, to reduce the number of unemployed people in Britain to a statistical fiction.

This Bill proposes to open up the labour market. It encourages people to take up

"the growing number of jobs on offer",

as the Government's own press release put it in December of last year. They propose to do that by reducing the protection for the unemployed, by proposing that the level of remuneration will not be "a good cause" for claimants refusing a job and by insisting that they demonstrate, somehow, "in conversation" that they are actively seeking work. The Government will penalise those who do not accept part-time, temporary and low-paid jobs.

The key shift in our economy is not simply between the employed and the unemployed. It is between those in relatively secure, reasonably—if not well—paidwork with prospects and those who are condemned to the part-time, temporary, low-wage economy.

I am reminded by the intervention of the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) that many people in Britain live on a wage that is well below £132 a week, or £3·50 an hour. I invite Conservative Members to say whether they would be prepared to negotiate their benefits away for wages of less than £2 an hour, which is the rate at which many jobs in my constituency are now advertised. That hidden economic division is the basis of the assumptions that are made in the Bill. It is the basis of the assumption that the long-term unemployed have unrealistic wage expectations and that they are facing what the Government describe as "disincentive problems". I submit that to sustain current economic development the Government need actively to promote a two-tier economic structure—those in full-time, relatively well-paid jobs, with good tax reductions, and those in part-time, temporary and low-paid work.

Different standards apply. Those in the top sector get the benefit of tax cuts and more income as an incentive, but those at the bottom will find that even those benefits that they now have will be taken away. That is a classic example of the carrot for the top and the stick for the bottom. That is the reality that faces many of the 9·4 million people in our society who are currently on low pay.

The Government's economic development depends on the development of a part-time, temporary and low-paid sector. The Bill is about forcing the unemployed into that sector. That is what flexibility means when Conservative Members refer to it. There is no talk of a sense of contribution of work by people in our society. There is no talk of their having something to offer and some prospects. It is simply a matter of their being available for a few hours

a week, or they will get nothing. They may be accused of pricing themselves out of work, but the Government are intent on pricing the unemployed out of sight altogether.

8.39 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I am grateful to be called to contribute to this important debate, and I should like to comment on three of the proposals in the Bill.

In the first place, I welcome clause 19, which introduces the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes. Something good can sometimes come out of Europe, as Labour Members might like to note. It is a useful move towards equal professional opportunities for men and women which will be much welcomed; we hope that it will be developed in other areas and in other legislation.

I should like to give a warm welcome, as Members on both sides have already done, to the extension of mobility allowance from age 75 to 80, which is again in principle of help that reflects the increasing numbers of very elderly people. It is an excellent move, and I am glad that Labour Members have welcomed that and other parts of the Bill.

Clearly, one of the most controversial parts of the Bill is contained in clause 7 and those other clauses that are to be taken with it. They amend existing legislation so that a requirement for entitlement to unemployment benefit is that a person must be "actively seeking" work and must also demonstrate that he is so doing. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have already pointed out that the current position is that claimants are required to be available for work. They should apply for jobs; they should respond to suggestions given by jobcentres; and they are required from time to time to confirm that they are available.

However, the very reason that those clauses are in the Bill is that the law needs enforcing. People working in jobcentres need to be given powers to ensure that it is being carried out. The law also needs this to take account—this is most important and has not been mentioned by Labour Members—of the vastly changed and changing employment situation in much of the country. It should be made clear at the outset that the majority of claimants—again, there is broad agreement here—are genuinely seeking work, but it must also be recognised, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) said, that those working in jobcentres know the people who are not genuinely seeking work, who turn down job opportunities for a variety of reasons, sometimes not genuine reasons, and who continue to claim benefit. Some of those people are undoubtedly working in the black economy. It is as absurd to pretend that all abuse the system as to maintain that none do.

Some people have pointed out that the public understanding of the position is that it is not possible to claim benefit if the claimant is not actively seeking to find and take available work. I am not so sure that that is in fact the case, because, certainly in areas such as the one that I represent, where employment opportunities are many, the public are mystified when they see, side by side, unemployment statistics and job vacancies. I accept that there are regional variations and it would be foolish to pretend that they do not exist. They have already been recognised in the opening remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who said that regional differences would be taken into account when the regulations were being applied. However, meanwhile, in areas where there are good employment prospects, people feel that the numbers of unfilled vacancies sit oddly next to the statistics of the unemployed.

I should like to quote a specific example drawn from my constituency. A major employer, a food processor, based in one of my market towns, currently employs 600 people. The company wishes to expand its operations and to recruit at least 100 more people. I should point out, mainly because of the point made by Labour Members, particularly by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), that the company pays above the average manual wage to the factory. Transport is provided, not from a central point, but from the doors of the people working in the factory. The work is done in shifts, which suits many people, including women. It is pleasant and there are good staff benefits.

In November, according to the statistics, the number of local people unemployed was 1,400; that is about 6·9 per cent. The company therefore undertook a major advertising campaign on local radio, in the local press and through the local jobcentre. As a result of this major campaign, the company received 44 inquiries, rather less than 2 per cent. of the 1,400 people unemployed. Twenty-six people attended for interviews, 20 were offered jobs, 17 started work, four left and two who accepted failed to turn up. The company therefore succeeded in taking 13 out of an alleged 1,400 people in the area, rather less than 1 per cent. One of the leavers commented that it was "harder work than staying at home"; that is undoubtedly true, but we must ask ourselves whether that is a good reason for turning down work.

I must also point out to Labour Members that the comments of the people working in the factory, when they learned of the numbers who attended and the numbers who stuck to the job, bear very little relation to the attitudes that we are assured by Labour Members are held by many people. Many of the comments were not such that I could repeat them in this House.

Mrs. Beckett: That is the second time that the hon. Lady has referred to our remarks about the attitudes that we believe are generally held. Certainly I do not suggest that the attitudes that are generally held are anything other than those that she has described. That is a matter for sadness. It is my understanding and experience that those who have work, particularly people in low-paid work, frequently show little understanding of or interest in the position of those who are less fortunate. I do not for that reason think that those comments are invalid.

I would not in any circumstances suggest that the attitudes expressed by the hon. Lady or the attitudes quoted by the Secretary of State are not generally held. It is a different matter whether they are valid and represent the reality of the situation in most parts of the country in respect of the number of jobs available and the number of people seeking to take them. I [illegible] sure that the hon. Lady is unwittingly misrepresenting what has been said by Labour Members.

Mrs. Shephard: I do not wish to misrepresent anything said by Labour Members, but, as mention has been made of the Clapham omnibus and the feelings of those people riding on it, I should point out that considerable resentment is felt by people in work if they perceive that

[Mrs. Shephard]

others, who have the opportunity of the same work, prefer to remain at home supported by the taxes of those people who are in work.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): As they feel so strongly about this, can my hon. Friend inquire from the Opposition Front Bench why only three Labour Back-Bench Members are present to consider this?

Mrs. Shephard: I am sure that the House will draw its own conclusions.

My area is fortunate, as we have several companies wishing to expand and a buoyant job market but, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will point out, there are many such areas in Britain and their number is increasing all the time. Given the job opportunities available, employers and the public are mystified that there should be at the same time unemployment—apparently 6 per cent. or so in my area—and unfilled vacancies.

Naturally, allowances must be made for inaccurate statistics—in a rapidly moving job market, it is difficult to keep track of statistics—but when suitable work is available, surely it makes good sense both for individuals and the economy as a whole, first that people should be encouraged to take that work and to demonstrate their wish to do so, and secondly, that unemployment benefit should be used for those in genuine difficulty. Again, there must be agreement on all sides on that.

The principle behind clause 7—that people should be encouraged to take available work and to demonstrate that they are actively seeking it—is broadly welcomed by the public. But care will be needed, and will undoubtedly be taken in Committee, in drafting regulations to ensure both that it will be more difficult for people in the black economy to claim benefits and that the regulations will not make life harder for unemployed people with genuine difficulties.

I wish to single out a particular group where special care will need to be taken—those people who are 50 or over. Despite a buoyant job market, those people often find it difficult to get work. I note that age is to be one of the good causes to be taken into account by the adjudicating officer, together with physical capabilities. It will be important for people over 50 who have had long work experience to recognise the particular difficulties that their age and even their physical capabilities may present for them in taking an unfamiliar job. If older people have been out of work for some time, they may suffer a lack of confidence about taking on unfamiliar work. A trial period of six weeks should help to ensure that no one will incur sanctions if the job genuinely does not work out.

Clearly, when the Bill comes into force, officers who organise job clubs and who are involved in restart schemes will have increased responsibilities in ensuring that people are helped to keep the necessary records and can keep up the search for work. That must be recognised in appropriate training for those officers.

In the interests of the economy as a whole and of the use of public money to help those genuinely in employment difficulties, and in the interests of unemployed people who may need encouragement to take advantage of a rapidly improving employment market in many areas, the whole Bill, and this clause in particular, deserve to be welcomed, as I believe they will be throughout the country.

8.54 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I wish to address my remarks to clauses 7 to 10, which tighten up the "availability for work" clauses and add to them.

The so-called justification for that is based on a survey of the London labour market carried out by the Department of Employment. The Government have either misunderstood or misrepresented it. It refers to 150,000 unfilled vacancies in London. I have studied the survey, and that is an estimate, not an accepted figure. I always distrust such nice, round figures, and I do not know how Ministers conjure them out of the ether.

That figure is incompatible with another figure. Table 18 of the report says that employers in London notify 45 per cent. of their vacancies to jobcentres. The Department of Employment figure for unfilled jobcentre vacancies in London is 35,000. If employers notify 45 per cent. of their vacancies, the total number of vacancies should be about 78,000, or 2·25 times the number notified to jobcentres, not 150,000. If the main conclusion of the report can be so wrong, we should be a little cautious about the remainder.

The Government are seeking to give the impression that there is a big stock of either 78,000 or 150,000 vacancies in London, and they claim 700,000 vacancies nationwide that are ready, waiting and available for the unemployed. But they suggest that the unemployed will neither look for nor take them. That is a complete illusion and a grotesque misunderstanding. There is no stock and any idea that a stock of unfilled vacancies exists is nonsense.

These figures are a measure of turnover, not of stock. Vacancies flow in and filled vacancies flow out. If the Minister will read the report—I doubt whether he has, but if he wishes to correct me he may do so—he will see that it acknowledges what I am saying. It states that 700,000 new employees are taken on each year in London. The annual vacancy outflow from London jobcentres is about 400,000 a year which is nearly 34,000 a month, so the truth is that it is not a stock, but a flow.

In the quarter to 2 September 1988, clerical jobs were filled after a median period of four weeks, retail jobs after 2·7 weeks, catering jobs after three weeks, building labourer vacancies after 3·2 weeks and general labourer vacancies after 4·2 weeks, so there is not a static figure, but a flow. There is no evidence of a large pool of vacancies remaining unfilled because the unemployed are unwilling to take them.

Mr. Jack: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Leighton: No. I am grateful that the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) is paying attention, but I should prefer it if he would lend me his ears rather than his prejudices, because there is the question of time to consider. If there is time later, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jack: Will the hon. Gentleman assist me by answering one question? When did he last visit his local jobcentre or social security office to validate his last statement?

Mr. Leighton: I make such visits regularly. I extend to the hon. Gentleman an open invitation to accompany me on a visit to my local jobcentre, where I regularly review the results of restart interviews. I do so all the time. As

Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment, I suspect that I know as much about the subject as does the hon. Member for Fylde.

One crucial question to which no one has yet paid any attention is that of who fills the vacancies that occur. The truth leaps from the report that has been prayed in aid. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Fylde, who just intervened, would pay attention. I thought that he was interested in this matter, but apparently he is not. If he is interested, I am anxious to enlighten him.

The truth of the matter, which leaps from the pages of the survey that has not been read by the Minister, is that most vacancies are filled by those who are already employed and who are merely switching jobs. Of those recruited to non-managerial or professionl jobs, for example, during the last 12 months, only 2 per cent. had been unemployed for six months or more. That demonstrates a huge employer prejudice against recruiting unemployed people. The report reveals that employers either did not know that long-term unemployed existed or were hostile to them. The unemployed fail to get jobs not because they are unwilling to take them but because of employers' recruitment practices and their reluctance to hire those who are currently unemployed.

The phenomenon of the discouraged worker is well known. I speak of the person who has been rejected so often that he or she wonders whether it is worth continuing to seek employment. Yet the report shows that 87 per cent. of unemployed had looked for work in the month preceding their interview. It reveals also that the unemployed do not expect high wages, and that they are willing to travel.

The Secretary of State for Employment is not present in the Chamber, although the Secretary of State for Social Security is on the Government Front Bench. If the right hon. Gentleman will examine the document that he has prayed in aid, he will see that in his foreword to it, the Secretary of State for Employment states that only a "small minority" of unemployed have never looked for work. It is wrong to formulate public policy and enact legislation for a minority rather than for the majority.

A core of vacancies is hard to fill, but that is because of skills or geographical mismatches. The unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed—most of whom are victims of Government policy—need and deserve help and understanding. They do not need, nor do they deserve, persecution and harassment. Many black people have higher qualifications than whites. They visit jobcentres more often than white people, yet they suffer twice the level of unemployment. I hope that the Minister will comment on that point.

There is a fundamental division of approach between Government and Opposition Members, but I hope that it does not include every Conservative Member. That division is between those, apparently including the Government, who believe that the poor and unemployed cannot find jobs because of their personal deficiencies—such as a lack of motivation and a willingness to live off the state—and those, like myself, who believe that there are several reasons why people remain so long on benefit. They include the absence of fair opportunities to compete for suitable jobs, a lack of skills, a lack of supporting services such as child care, discrimination and, most importantly, a shortage of jobs in the first place.

The first group want schemes and programmes to be compulsory for the reasons I have explained. Because we know the unemployed better than they do, the second group, knowing that the unemployed want to work, want voluntary programmes that will win willing support and participation. Voluntary programmes enhance their participants' feelings of control over their own lives—the feeling that they have choices, which are usually denied to the poor.

Instead, the Government are going for conscription. Already YTS is compulsory. Now, other programmes are moving towards compulsion—that is what the Government are doing by changing and tightening the "availability for work" formula. No one in the House defends those who defraud the system, but that is already unlawful. This Bill threatens to police and prosecute people who are already disadvantaged enough. They need understanding and aid, and more effective, better staffed and more user-friendly employment services.

Employers need to be induced to send all their vacancies, not merely a small percentage of them, to jobcentres. Unemployed people need more trained counsellors to offer them quality training, advice and assistance. When people are unemployed through no fault of their own, they need to be made to feel valued members of society and to be helped and supported through a difficult period back into good and well-paid employment. Like others, the unemployed and their families have paid their rates and taxes and have their rights as citizens to these services.

This is an unworthy, mean, nasty, spiteful measure, which cannot conceivably be justified by an analysis of the survey of the London labour market.

9.7 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): As two thirds of the Bill consists either of minor adjustments or of tidying-up measures, I am amazed by the stance of the Opposition on it. If only they would apply common sense, they would support it. Instead, the usual prejudice and accusations have been trotted out, that the Government have a hidden agenda. As usual, the Opposition have claimed that the Government do not care about people in this country——

Mr. Battle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman should make it clear that whereas some of us have been here throughout the entire debate, he has not —yet he has the audacity to cast a slur on what we have said.

Mr. Speaker: I have only just come into the Chamber. The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) gave notice earlier that he wanted to participate. I do not know whether he has been out of the Chamber.

Mr. Wilshire: I have been in and out during the debate for the simple reason that part of Heathrow is in my constituency, and matters to do with air crashes have kept me having to go in and out in the course of the day. So I make no apology for not having heard all the speeches. What I have heard has convinced me that once again the Opposition are talking nonsense. They ignore the abuses in this country, they ignore the waste, and above all they ignore public opinion. If they do not believe that, or will not take it from me, let them check the opinion polls, which prove how out of touch with public opinion the Opposition are on this matter.

[Mr. Wilshire]

It is important to set the Bill in its context. Twenty of its 29 clauses are routine—refunding contributions, helping individuals with housing benefits and streamlining war pension administration. These and other matters dealt with in 20 of the 29 clauses should receive the support of us all. The remaining nine clauses raise six issues that may divide us in Committee. I have no hesitation in saying that I support wholeheartedly all six major issues. As I am conscious of the time, I shall deal with only three of the six issues.

First, I shall speak about clause 4 and the matter of more parental support for children. Secondly, I want to deal briefly with clauses 6 to 10, which concern unemployment benefit and income support changes. Thirdly, I want to speak briefly about clause 18, which concerns the recovery of payments when damages have been awarded. I have chosen those three issues because they demonstrate to me—and, I believe, to everybody else—three basic truths about the Government's approach. The first truth is that the Government have values that are founded on clear principles. The second truth is that the Government are doing a great deal more, through the Bill, to help those who are in real need. Thirdly, the Bill shows that the Government are still busy reversing the Socialist excesses of the post-war years.

Clause 4 proposes that parents should be asked to make a bigger contribution towards their children's education. For me, that is another important step towards revitalising the concept of the family in this country. At present, there is blanket help for all children of divorced or separated parents, which has two effects. First, it makes it easier for a parent to walk out on a child and secondly, it undermines the role of parenthood. Those two effects lead in themselves to a further undermining of the family unit. Clause 4 has nothing to do with financial savings; money is not the issue being raised. Clause 4 seeks to encourage family life and stresses that parenthood is a matter of great responsibility, so people who can afford to do so must be encouraged and required to make a contribution to their children. I am reassured to see that, when such help cannot be afforded, there are provisions to make alternative arrangements through Government help.

The second issue with which I want to deal is covered by clauses 6 to 10. They have been discussed in detail and deal with changes in unemployment benefit and income support. The clauses address circumstances that the great majority of people in this country feel are unjust as they stand. Let us consider those who retire—I stress the word retire—early with a pension. Such people do not need and should not expect as much help as someone who is genuinely wholly unemployed. Let us also consider those who are not really seeking a job or are moonlighting. Such people exist, whatever the Opposition say, and do not need or deserve as much help as those who are desperate to find work and are doing everything they can. I shall respect the Opposition when they speak from their own experience.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman can sit down. He talked about speaking from experience. I have been unemployed many times in my life——

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Not enough.

Mr. Heffer: It is clear that Conservative Members have never experienced the humiliation of being out of work, losing their dignity and believing ultimately that they themselves, rather than the system, are responsible for unemployment. The system is responsible, so we have a responsibility to all those who are more unfortunate than ourselves.

Mr. Wilshire: I am very happy to speak from direct experience. In my constituency—which is just as valid an example as the other 649—a total of 934 people were unemployed when I checked yesterday, and there were 1,200 vacancies. Given those circumstances, the Government are absolutely right to act. My experience is just as valid as that of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). I make no apology. The circumstances to which I refer apply in a growing number of constituences. We have to ask why all those people are unemployed when there are more vacancies than there are people seeking work.

The third issue about which I wish to speak briefly is the recovery of payments when damages are awarded. This is dealt with in clause 18. Like others, I have been approached by the CBI——

Mr Leighton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: No, I will not. I am conscious of the time. I have been approached by the CBI——

Mr. Leighton *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time. The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is not giving way.

Mr. Wilshire: It seems to me that if the CBI is against something we are probably justified in being in favour of it. But taxpayers' money should not be used to subsidise negligence, and double recovery of damages is wrong. I ask myself who is speaking against this, and I reply that it is those who would have to pay. The answer to them is simple: if they are not negligent, they will not have to pay anything.

Two-thirds of the Bill is relatively minor and deserves the support of us all. The remaining six issues are wholly in tune with public opinion and a sensible concept of a social security system. Anyone who votes against these measures will be ignoring the wishes of the overwhelming majority in the country. As I said at the outset, if Opposition Members will not believe me, let them read the opinion polls.

9.16 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I wish to confine my remarks to the core of the Bill. We all know that the Bill is about the new tests on availability for work. The tests move on from availability for work to actively seeking work, and are linked with the new provision that people must take a job at any level of income. That is the core; the rest of the Bill contains bits of reforms of one kind or another that were added on once that central strategic move had been made.

I object strongly and deeply to the style of the debate. The quality of our democracy has declined gravely and worryingly in recent years, and the quality of debate in the House is at such a low level that if most people in the

country who confront the issues that we discuss were to hear it our institutions would be brought into grave disrepute.

It is plain that Tory Members have received some kind of handout from Conservative Central Office. One after another—often they have not all been in the Chamber at the same time—they have churned out the same remarks. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who has obviously read the material concerned, gave some examples.

The line that Conservative Members have been taking is the "big lie" tactic. One after another they have tried to say that the Bill is all about reforming our social security system, which at present allows the minority who scrounge and defraud the system to get away with it. They say that they are imposing constraints to stop that, and that the Labour party is in favour of scroungers. They have said that over and over tonight, and have constantly challenged us to say that we are not in favour of scroungers.

If there were some level of objective rationality with which we had to comply in the Chamber, such junk would not be allowed. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who spoke for the alliance or the Democrats—I am sorry that I cannot keep up with the labels—put on record the existing framework of law. I do not know whether Conservative Members are at all interested, but the framework in the 1975 Act, which is the basic framework that has been in place in the post-war social security settlement, imposed on everyone a duty to seek work and to accept jobs that were offered. If they did not accept jobs that were offered, they had to take training. That framework used to be agreed between the parties and was part of Britain's post-war settlement.

Since 1979, under this new-Right Thatcherite regime, there has been a considerable tightening up on availability for work. There has been a tough new questionnaire. People have to prove that they are instantly available to start work and that they do not have dependants for whom they have to care. In my constituency, as a result of the collapse in the west midlands after 1979, many men started picking up their children from school, giving them tea and so on—something that they never used to do in the past. They say that one of the few enjoyments that have come from losing the job that they did for 20 or 30 years is seeing more of their children. If such people cannot make arrangements overnight to accommodate their children or their elderly parents, they are not available for work. People have to prove that they are willing to travel further and to accept lower wages. That tightening up has taken place under the Government.

Then the restart scheme was introduced along with another massive questionnaire. People were called in every six months. There was a menu of so-called opportunities, job clubs, schemes that did not lead to jobs and such a series of offers. People received letters saying that their benefit would be stopped unless they attended their restart interviews. Surveys show that the majority of people who go through that process think that they have to join a job club, community programme or employment training scheme or lose their benefit. All that is in place now.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire read out the tribunal's interpretation of availability for work as "actively seeking work"; a person must take positive measures to seek work. All that is in place and thousands of people have had their money questioned. The unemployment benefit of 500,000 people has been called into question because they were not available for work. Between July 1987 and June 1988, a total of 173,268 claims for unemployment benefit were referred because of doubts about availability. The figures have gone up and up as the Government introduced their stringent tests.

People are hounded now on availability for work in an unsavoury and nasty way. Most end up going in and out of rotten schemes, job clubs, short-term work, low-paid jobs, being laid off, or going into a scheme and out of a scheme. That is the reality for large numbers of people in Britain. So do not let this Chamber descend to such a level that the big lie is repeated time and again. Conservative Members pretend that everyone is in prosperous work and that only the scroungers will be threatened by the Bill. That is false. If we are to discuss new legislation, let us discuss it accurately.

If Tory Members do not know that the line that they are putting across is false, the people in need in their constituencies do not go to them. Some Tory Members could not have made the speeches that they made tonight if they had seen the kind of people that Labour Members see regularly in their constituencies. Either they know that their line is false or they do not help the people in need in their constituencies. There is poverty and low pay throughout Britain. Things are better in the south-east than in the rest of the country, but there is plenty of poverty and low pay in the south-east as well.

Why do we have the Bill? Is it just one of those nasty, knee jerk, *Sun*-level, Mr. Murdoch promises that have to be made at the Tory party conference, which is where the Bill was promised? We know that the Secretary of State's reputation was in difficulty at that time. We know that he had been ill, and we are sorry about that, but he came up with this promise to catch the scroungers. Is it just the result of prejudice and nastiness or is there a strategy underlying it?

Part of the Bill is the result of prejudice and nastiness, but there is a strategy underlying it. It is a serious strategy which affects Britain's whole labour market. Since the Government took power they have set about systematically dismantling a series of minimum protections—many put in place by Winston Churchill, who is supposedly the Prime Minister's hero—so that we did not have competition through ever-cheapening wages, the bad employer throwing out the worst, and so on, in a downward spiral.

A series of historical protections that have existed for many years in our country have been deliberately and systematically removed by the Government in order to encourage low pay which, they say, is better than unemployment. However, we know that areas of high unemployment have many people on low pay. The Government have just promised to look again at the very existence of the wages councils and to demolish yet another piece of protection. They have been enormously successful.

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Ms. Short: I have been sitting in the Chamber all day. I will not speak for too long, but I want to make my speech. I will not take messages from my own Whip or from you, Mr. Speaker, to prevent me making the simple points I want to make. I have sat in the Chamber for a

[Ms. Short]

significant number of hours. This is not a game to me. I really mean this. It is about real people's lives and the future of our country. I want to put my points on record.

The Government's strategy to dismantle the protection for low-paid workers has been supremely successful. We have more low-paid workers in our country than ever before. There has been an enormous growth in the number of low-paid workers. That is one of the major new economic records of the Government, who claim that they have created such monumental prosperity.

We now have 9·4 million workers—40 per cent. of those in work—who are paid less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold, at which we are all supposed to aim as a minimum. That means that that proportion of our people struggle between dependency on benefits and such low-paid work that they still live in poverty. They often find themselves out of work again because of the insecure conditions. That is the reality for nearly half our population.

The Bill and the further threat to the wages councils mean that even more significant numbers of people will live in poverty. The Government say, "Never mind, family credit is available. You can be subsidised if you are low paid." The problem is that only one third of those entitled take up the benefit. What is that subsidy? Apart from the poverty and lack of dignity, it is fantastically inefficient economically. That is a big benefit subsidy that goes to inefficient employers who pay low wages, seek to compete through a low wage strategy and do not invest or train. There is no future for that sort of economy post-1992.

The Government's strategy not only damages the interests of many people and their dignity in life but is massively dangerous to the future of our economy. With low-paid work, no training, high turnover of labour, no investment and a low-paid economy, we will not survive post-1992. The Government's strategy—the core of the Bill—is for more low pay, using the social security system to frighten people into accepting any old low-paid job. That is bad for people. There is no dignity and justice in it and it is bad for the economy.

I deeply regret that our country has sunk so low that such a Bill should come before the House and be debated at such a low level with the poor quality of the speeches made by Conservative Members.

9.28 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): It is a pleasure although a daunting task to follow the impassioned and uniquely well-informed contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short).

We are grateful to have drawn the support of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and some guarded comments from one Conservative Member over what we believe is one of the principal errors of the Bill. In clause 2, there is a subtle but massive shift in wealth, again in the wrong direction. An aging society with expensive medical needs is about to cut the Government's contribution to national insurance. That has been in place since 1911. The long-term cumulative effect will be as iniquitous and unjust as the income tax handouts to the super-rich in the 1988 Budget.

In 1945, the levels were set at 40 per cent. paid by the employer, 40 per cent. by the employee and 20 per cent. by the Government. That was virtually intact in 1979. It would have amounted to £5·3 billion; that is the equivalent of the vast amount that is about to be moved as a burden from taxpayers to national insurance payers. It represents a further erosion of the hope of a fair, progressive taxation of equitable contributions on the basis of ability to pay.

A substantial redistribution has taken place already, moving the tax obligation from the wealthy to the less well-off taxpayer. By lessening the taxes paid by the rich, the more articulate and the influential, the Government have successfully fostered the illusion that they have reduced taxes generally. The truth is that, while in 1978-79 the proportion of GDP raised from taxes was 34 per cent., it now stands at 38 per cent.

The income tax cuts have been enjoyed by the higher paid, but for most people the reductions have been wiped out by increases in national insurance and VAT. National insurance payments are the least progressive contributions, hitting low earners as soon as their wages reach the princely sum of £41 a week, while top salary earners escape lightly with a flat-rate contribution. We are witnessing a further twist in the spiral that leads to the poverty of the unemployed and adds to the poverty of those on average wages and those in low-wage employment.

When Labour left office in 1979, Treasury contributions stood at 18 per cent. Almost annually the Tories have cut it to its present level of 5 per cent., while increasing the contributions that employees have to pay, from 6·5 per cent. to 9 per cent. The Government are hugging and congratulating themselves with joy at this prospect. But while they will be pocketing what the amount would have been had they maintained the rate—£5·3 billion—that money, if we look at it another way, has been picked directly from the pockets of the pensioners and those on benefit because the level has not been maintained in real terms in the way it should have been maintained. One can see that that £5·3 billion is very near to the sum out of which the Government have cheated the pensioners over the years by severing the link between earnings and pensions. That stands at £6·3 billion.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Flynn: There is not enough time for me to give way.

That money has been taken precisely from the deserving.

The "actively seeking work" rule has, rightly, received much attention in the debate. It is another piece of irrelevant malice exhumed from its putrid sepulchre. That has been done because baiting the unemployed is a favourite Tory sport. How Conservative Members roared their approval at the Tory party conference when they were promised that new barriers would be erected for the unemployed to scale. They would have been frozen into mute, white-faced shock if a crackdown on income tax evasion had been threatened. Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), have asked why the honest taxpayer should suffer the welfare cheat. Let us put it the other way round and ask why the claims of the honest claimant should be cut by the cheating tax dodger.

Mr. Burns *rose*——

Mr. Flynn: No, I will not give way.

Those who cheat and abuse the system should be punished and pursued, and evidence has been given that

when in government, Labour brought many people to book—far more proportionately than are being brought to book now.

But who are the real scroungers? That, I believe, is what the hon. Member for Chelmsford would like to know. The estimates given to the Public Accounts Committee showed that 20 prosecutions were made against individuals for making false returns of income tax or false claims for personal allowances. The cost of income tax fraud is estimated at £5 billion. The cost of dole fraud is estimated at £500 million and the number of prosecutions for that has totalled 14,000, a ratio of one individual pursued through the courts for tax fraud for every 700 prosecuted for welfare deception—one prosecution for every £35,000 fiddled in dole compared with one prosecution for every £25 million fiddled in tax. There is an unanswerable case for better targeting on income tax cheats.

The hon. Member for Chelmsford rejoiced in the fact that there will be more inspectors to hound those who are cheating on the dole. No one disagrees with that pursuit. It is wrong that such cheating should be happening. But we ask for some fairness and even-handedness. There should be some attempt to deal with those who are robbing the country of very large sums of money through income tax evasion.

We have heard a great deal about the Conservative approach to assessing those who are cheating. The most enlightened figure that we have heard comes from the expert opinion quoted by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, who said: "The man on the Clapham omnibus could tell her". That is a populist belief. But who will assess those who are actively seeking jobs? We know that the present laws insist that unemployed people have to make positive efforts to seek work. Those laws have existed for many years. They have been enforced vigorously and harshly through strict availability testing. We know that the Government must be planning something even worse than that.

We do not have to look in a crystal ball when we have graphic reports of what happened when the availability to work test in another form—the "genuinely seeking work" test—was enforced in the 1920s. Mr. John Hilton, an assistant secretary at the Ministry of Labour, made a tour to discover how the test was working. He went to labour exchanges and saw people being interrogated. They were asked, "When did you look for a job?" and they gave a litany of firms such as, "This week I went to Hatfields, to Gibbons and to Davies." They were asked, "Where did you go on Tuesday?" and, "What does the manager look like? Is he tall? Has he a moustache?" According to John Hilton, if the information given was true, every person would have been applying for those jobs 10 times a week. It would have meant that firms in Merthyr and in Sheffield would have had one person calling every minute of every day. The system encouraged those who could tell the tale. Those who were deceiving were successful and those who told the truth were punished. If this measure is introduced, it will have precisely the same effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) eloquently pointed out the weaknesses in the statistics in "The London Labour Market" report. We should look to other statistics. A report by Harris Research used a much larger sample and showed that 73 per cent. of unemployed people sampled had looked for work in the previous week and 87 per cent. had looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview. The unemployed in the London labour market survey were not questioned in depth about why they were not looking for work, but we know that those groups are mostly the quarterly unemployed who have had enough. They have reached the point where they can take it no more. We seek some assurances on this matter. In areas where the jobs famine is really chronic, the discouraged unemployed will be coerced into the endless charade of seeking jobs that pobably do not exist.

We have heard about the job clubs. They have made a valuable contribution in increasing the self-confidence of workers, pointing them in new directions and breaking down isolation. But if we take the magic of the job club and use the analysis published in the midlands, where only 134 job entries resulted from 30,000 speculative job applications, what kind of active job searching would we need to achieve the Government's target in London of 140,000 job entries? It would require 500,000 speculative visits to produce 6 per cent. of those jobs; 3,276,000 applications for advertised vacancies to produce 52 per cent. of those jobs; 4 million speculative telephone calls to produce another 17 per cent.; and 7,800,000 speculative letters to produce the other 25 per cent. of those jobs. That will not happen and cannot happen. We will not see that blizzard of job applications, that deluge of written letters and that bedlam of telephone calls which, in the Government's view, will create jobs. It cannot happen. However, we will see an endless procession of unemployed people having the sting of rejection added to the daily insult of unemployment that they face.

We have asked—we hope that we shall have a reply during the debate—about the comment of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) that the Bill will be interpreted sensitively. Opposition Members do not share that confidence, especially because of the way in which restart and other measures have been introduced.

However, there are some timely clauses and some sensible clauses that we are happy to support. There has been an accusation that we are clinging to the shibboleths of the 1930s, but the Government are taking us back to the 1920s and beyond. The Government have claimed that similar measures are in force in Eire, Australia, and New Zealand. We have checked and although I do not have time to go into details now, it is clear that as far as we know there are no such provisions in any of those countries.

The Bill will be seen as an unnecessary and pernicious attempt to reassemble part of the cruel dark world of the past. Parts of the Bill have been conceived in prejudice, ignorance and malice. It has been prompted by a brutal populism. It is unworthy of the statute book of a civilised country. The Bill should be consigned to where it belongs —the dustbin of history.

9.41 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on his first Front Bench appearance as an Opposition Social Security spokesman. His eloquence was impressive—his argument not quite so. I shall deal with some of the points that he put forward later. We welcome him to his new responsibilities.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) described the Bill as a "curate's egg", presumably acknowledging that it is good in parts, as did the hon.

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

Member for Newport, West. I prefer to describe it as an hors d'oeuvre with a variety of flavours, some appealing to all hon. Members but some appealing only to a few, or to Conservative Members only.

The Bill contains a considerable number of clauses, as does any Social Security Bill which tidy previous legislation or are merely technical amendments to the existing law. I make no complaint that those who have spoken for the Opposition have most frequently concentrated on those clauses with which they most disagree. That is why we are here.

However, I think all hon. Members warmly welcome one clause—and several have done so. I refer to the proposal to increase from 75 to 80 the age limit for receipt of mobility allowance. The House knows that, in the context of the OPCS survey into the extent, nature and circumstances of disabled people in this country, we are reviewing the whole structure of benefits for disabled people. If we had not taken this measure, the first people would have ceased to received mobility allowance in 1989. Obviously, that had to be avoided. The entire benefit will of course be reviewed in the context of the OPCS reports. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) drew particular attention to that. As I have said, we must await the outcome of the survey.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) acknowledged the benefits of that benefit but urged us to pursue a take-up campaign. Obviously, I want to encourage the maximum take-up of any benefit available. It is worth noting in passing that in numbers, since 1978-79 when 95,000 people were receiving mobility allowance, until the current year when 540,000 people are receiving it, we have seen a sixfold increase in the numbers of claimants with a 500 per cent. increase in expenditure on this important and well-targeted benefit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) set out the principles that she hoped would guide the evolution of the social security system. It is important to emphasise that no social security system can ever be set in concrete for a lengthy period. Society is dynamic and changes, and the social security system must change too.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne drew particular attention to the need for social security law for liable relatives to come into line with family law. She urged us, too, to do more to get absent fathers, who were liable to support their children, to provide that support. My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) made the same point. I believe that it is a sensible and responsible way for the law to operate. I emphasise that no one will go down the route suggested in an early-day motion of pressing mothers into pursuing fathers to make the payment themselves. The practice of the Department of Social Security is to attempt to obtain the support for these children by sensible administrative measures, which is the path which we shall continue to pursue. Of course, if a voluntary arrangement is possible, that can often be the quickest and simplest way to achieve that support. However, no one will go down the route of pressing mothers in circumstances which could put them in, perhaps physical, and certainly emotional, danger.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) pointed out the looming shortage of manpower and skills and the need to motivate people to seek employment. We shall return to that provision in this Bill, but it is worth saying that, by the development of in-work benefits, by increases in tax thresholds at the lower end and by tax levels, the Government have made a significant contribution in this area already.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), speaking, as he said, for the first time from the freedom of the Back Benches, drew attention to the links between the possibility of social security advance and the economic performance of the country. We are spending a massive £50 billion-plus on social security, which has only been possible because of the successful economic performance of the Government's policies. My hon. Friend, too, mentioned liable relatives and the mobility allowance. He welcomed what we were able to do here and supported the employment clauses, to which I shall return.

Mr. Corbyn: As the hon. Gentleman is talking about the great prosperity of this country, will he explain why tens of thousands of people have been denied any benefit under the restart scheme and many people have been denied any benefit under his social security regime? Should not that prosperity ensure that every family has a home and a reasonable income with which to maintain themselves?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman made that comment earlier and I shall deal with it when I come to those particular points. I must say that the successful economy was only made possible because at the beginning of our period of Government, we ensured that public expenditure was under control. That should be contrasted with what happened under the Labour Government when—in the words of Joel Barnett—the Labour Government spent the first two years spending money that they did not have.

Three areas of this Bill aroused controversy in the debate. The first was touched on by the hon. Member for Derby, South, who said that the proposals for the recovery of benefit from awards for personal injury had been opposed by those whom we consulted. I acknowledge that. Of course, those are the people who are operating the present system and I am not surprised that they raised doubts about this principle. However, I believe that the change that we are making in this area—by moving to recovery of those benefits from awards for personal injury—rests on two clear and indisputable principles. There should be no double compensation for the same injury, which is absolutely clear and has been supported by the courts consistently in recent years. Secondly, the taxpayer has no duty to subsidise those responsible, or their insurers, where an injury occurs.

I believe, too, that the costs on industry have been exaggerated in that area.

Let us consider employment costs rather than insurance premiums. A typical firm with about 1,000 employees might experience an increase of between 0·14 and 0·28 per cent. as a result of the changes. I believe that that burden can be sensibly borne by industry and commerce in the interests of achieving the two clear indisputable principles that I mentioned previously.

The decision to remove the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund also drew some controversial comment. That move was welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) but opposed by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). It is important to establish the facts. The current rate of

supplement from the Treasury to the national insurance fund is 5 per cent. At the start, in 1948, that supplement was 33 per cent., but the move has been inexorably downwards in the intervening years. The current yield is some £1·6 billion and in the coming year it is estimated at £1·75 billion. The fund's income in the year 1988-89 will be £29·1 billion and that will produce a surplus of £2·7 billion. The end of the year balance will be about £9·9 billion, equivalent to some 20 weeks' benefit expenditure—about the same number of weeks' expenditure as existed in the last year of the Labour Government.

In essence, recent developments and the growth of the fund has meant that the Treasury supplement is no longer necessary to sustain the fund. It was necessary in 1948 to balance the books because the old flat-rate contributions had to be set at a level low enough to be affordable by all. Now that the contributions themselves are earnings-related, that situation has changed.

What is possible now and what was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde, is logical and has been desirable all along. We can pay contributory benefits with contributions—that is equal to about £26 billion of benefit expenditure—and leave the taxpayer to pick up the bill for the non-contributory and income-related benefits amounting to about £20 billion.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that the increase in the national insurance contribution fund reflects the fact that people are earning more? An increase in earnings is bringing in more money. The Minister, however, is only protecting benefits, and the discrepancy is unfair,.

Mr. Scott: I do not believe that it is unfair, and if I had time I would debate this matter with the hon. Gentleman. We have fulfilled our pledge to protect benefits against inflation. Earnings-generated income into the fund has meant that the Treasury supplement is no longer necessary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde asked about the long term—Keynes had a word to say about that—and if demographic changes make a change in the pattern necessary, it will be for the Government of the day to establish the most sensible way in which to deal with that change.

The most controversial and the most discussed aspect of our proposals relates to the employment clauses and the proposal that people should be actively seeking, and not merely available for work. The present basic conditions for unemployment benefit are that a person must be physically capable of work and available for it. Our proposal is to introduce the additional condition that a person must also show that he is actively seeking work. I believe that that is common sense and that it is widely supported in the country.

There is a clear split across the Floor of the House on this matter. I believe, however, that most people not only support our proposal, but believe that that is how the system operates at the moment. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire appeared to be under that illusion. He mentioned the decision on R(U)5/80 and he advanced that as evidence of the existing situation.

That judgment referred to the need to take active steps, but, since then, further decisions have defined more closely what is an active step. In one example a claimant had attended a jobcentre, had not even left his name and address, and had gone away. The commissioners held, however, that that was sufficient to confirm his declaration that he was available and actively seeking work. That is nonsense, but that claimant had no obligation to do any more.

The other point that the hon. Gentleman raised was whether what we were proposing in this clause was a move towards workfare. I have three words to say about that: no, no and no. Our object is to encourage people into real jobs, not to force them into non-jobs. That is, and that remains, our conclusion.

Mr. Frank Field: When I raised this earlier, the Secretary of State nodded his head in agreement, and it would be useful to have it on the record. Are we right in thinking that, under the new rules, claimants will not be forced into jobs which pay them less than benefit? In other words, are the Government holding the Joseph line, which was precisely that?

Mr. Scott: If I may say so, commissioners' decisions have for many years past, under Governments of both persuasions, decided that it is legitimate for people to have to take a job which pays below the level of benefit they have been receiving. Under both Governments the commissioners have made this decision, so we are not changing this. What this Government have done, by the development of family credit, by our alterations to tax thresholds and other measures, is to make it almost impossible for anybody to be better off in benefit than in work.

Mr. Field: So the message we can take to our constituencies is that, thanks to all these marvellous changes the Government have made, people will not find themselves in the position of having to take a job which pays less than benefit?

Mr. Scott: I think the hon. Gentleman should read what I said in *Hansard* very carefully, and take it from there.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field)—it was a timely intervention by him—talked about a contract between the individual and the state. It is a fanciful concept, if I may say so, as he went on to say, to hold that the role of the state in this contract is to present the unemployed with a job. It seems to me that the unemployed themselves have a duty laid upon them to go out and actively seek work. What we can do as a Government is create a climate in which job opportunities expand, and we have created more job opportunities in the last 10 years in this country than any other country in Europe. We can encourage people to avail themselves of that opportunity, as we are doing in this Bill, and we can provide support services such as client advisers, counselling for the unemployed, job clubs, restart and employment training—now costing about £1·4 billion a year, and of high quality.

I believe too that as a Government we can make a contribution in moving jobs away from the areas of the country where the employment situation is tight and flourishing and away to the less developed parts of the United Kingdom. I very much hope that we will be able to do that, and I hope the hon. Gentleman will lend his support to us as a Government when some of the Luddites

[Mr. Scott]

in the London Labour party oppose it when we begin to move jobs in the social security system out of central London.

The hon. Member for Derby, South said that other countries did not have the provisions that we are putting forward. If I may, let me just tell the hon. Lady before I sit down what happens in Australia. In Australia, unemployment claimants have to register continuously with the Commonwealth employment service; they have actively to look for work; all claimants have to send fortnightly details of activity to their regional office; a claimant about whom there is a doubt as to whether he is making a real effort to find work must complete a work intention form, a questionnaire about his intentions and availability. If doubt still remains, a work effort certificate is issued by the mobile review team requiring claimants to provide signatures of employers he has approached. That is at least as tough as, and in my view tougher, than the proposals in this Bill.

I believe there is general support for what we are doing through the introduction of this clause and the clauses that are associated with it, and I believe that only the most perverse interpretation could describe this as punishment rather than encouragement of the unemployed into jobs. I believe this will encourage self-reliance and independence on the part of people in this country, and I make no apologies at all to the hon. Gentleman for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) for making that a major thrust of this policy.

Most people actively seek work. We are talking not about the majority of unemployed people who are actively seeking work but about the minority of people who are not actively seeking work. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) gave a clear example. Even the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) had to admit that a minority of people exploit the system. Genuine claimants have nothing to fear from our proposals. I believe that they will be welcomed by the country as a whole, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 230.

Division No. 28] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John

Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCusker, Harold
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nigel Griffiths and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Social Security may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock, or for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later.—*[Mr. Fallon]*

SOCIAL SECURITY BILL *[MONEY]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—
  (i) any expenses incurred under the Act by a Minister of the Crown;
  (ii) any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act;
(b) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Cold Weather Payments

Motion made and question proposed,

That the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendment Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988, No. 1908), dated 2nd November 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd November in the last Session of Parliament, be revoked.—*[Mrs. Beckett.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): With our customary generosity and magnanimity, it is a pleasure to congratulate the Government on adopting two of the improvements that we suggested to the severe weather payment scheme that we suggested, and on removing some of the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members beyond the Bar should either enter the Chamber or leave quietly.

Mr. Flynn: With this measure, the Government have removed one of the scheme's more demented features, whereby the seven-day qualifying period had to start on a Monday. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said last year that, unfortunately, in the past the frost had proved incapable of grasping the administrative convenience of starting any cold snap at the beginning of a working week. Are we perhaps experiencing a few flakes of Government generosity? Alas, no. The Government are propelled more by baser motives—particularly the crucial embarrassment factor.

In our last debate on social services, the House was treated to the announcement of the LEB money, or the Lawson embarrassment bonus. Money that was not available three weeks earlier, at the time of the Autumn Statement, or of the uprating statement, was suddenly found. All the arguments on the side of compassion, justice and fairness failed—but the purse strings snapped open to save the face of a vain and crumbling Chancellor. That was a valuable lesson for us all. Tonight, perhaps we will hear again about the winter premiums, because they were rejected by a previous Minister on the ground that he would be embarrassed if he had to increase the payments to pensioners in the autumn and then reduce them later, in the spring.

Many deserving groups throughout the country are praying that the Chancellor will devote another unattributable briefing to their cause, witnessed only by 10 journalists and a silent tape recorder. Many past decisions have been affected by the embarrassment factor. Perhaps one day there will be a scientific treatise on what happens as soon as the embarrassment quotient reaches a certain level and triggers Government action.

When the cold weather payment scheme was put to the test in 1986-87, it collapsed under the weight of its own complexity and absurdity. It is claimed that last winter it worked well—but it was not put to a severe test then. Tonight, the House is considering a scheme that remains wretched and ineffective. The miserly payment is still stuck at £5, despite soaring fuel costs and before electricity privatisation and the dreaded nuclear tax.

The average amount paid for heat and light by pensioners on the basic pension is £8 a week throughout the year and more than £16 a week throughout the winter months. There is no compensation for losses suffered by the elderly, the disabled and young families—losses which have been caused by the Government, principally by

abolishing heating additions that the elderly and people with children automatically receive under supplementary benefits. The Government will have taken £11·05 a week from all pensioners and £17·50 a week from couples by next April by severing the link between earnings and pensions. Instead of paying out automatically, they have chosen again to persist in forcing everyone to claim, thereby wasting money and reducing take-up. Last time there were claims on a significant scale, in the winter of 1986-87, 500,000 people out of a total of 1,400,000 who were entitled to claim did not. The cost of advertising the scheme in 1987 was the same as the severe weather payments to 82,800 people.

Why not change the system to an automatic pay-out? I was told in an answer from the Minister about the social security settlement that all the necessary details were available, except the information about whether the recipients possessed sums of £500. That problem could be eliminated by raising the limit above the rather disagreeable level of £500, the sum that many elderly people possess as funeral money. It should be raised to £3,000—that is the simple answer. Many people would then be given the extra money automatically and simply.

We could do with another examination of the local temperature figures which have been the subject of so much ridicule. The pay-out should be national or regional. In this context, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are treated as nations. That was what happened in 1987, when the Secretary of State decided to ignore his scheme and to declare a national trigger. A national system would mean a slight increase in the numbers receiving the benefit, but the administrative costs would plummet and take-up would rise to 100 per cent. Such a system would be simpler and cheaper and would reach those in greatest peril.

For peril it is. Each British winter, 40,000 people die because they are cold as well as old. The message from the Government to vulnerable people should be: turn up the heating when the bitter weather starts—your extra payment is guaranteed. In Britain, the death rate among the over-60s rises by 20 per cent. in the winter, as compared with the summer, and the death rate for children under one year old is 40 per cent. higher. These differences do not occur in Canada, Sweden or Norway, although those countries have far more severe winters.

We know that there is no scientifically accepted causal link between winter deaths and the cold, and that the matter is now under investigation, but we should not be guilty of avoiding the obvious explanation, which is that we, like New Zealand, which has a pattern of winter deaths similar to ours, have exceptionally unpredictable weather. To these unpredictable changes we need a response that is entirely reliable and predictable.

The recent report by the King's Fund Research Institute, based on World Health Organisation figures, found that men over 65 can now expect to live longer in 20 other countries, including Sri Lanka and Uruguay, than in Britain; and that women of the same age have a higher life expectancy in 16 other countries, including Greece and Spain. The poor showing in Britain is blamed on severe poverty and disadvantage among a large minority.

Our task is to convince those who are at risk that they have nothing to worry about when severe weather hits them. Fuel poverty is, sadly, just one symptom of general poverty. Many families and individuals are being cruelly hit by the cumulative effects of the neglected basic pension, of the losses of housing benefit, which has been cut by £600 million, and of the problems of repaying budget or crisis loans. People are now finding that their additional bills are not covered because their benefits are frozen by transitional payments.

The "keep well, keep warm" campaign message, which could have been useful, was eclipsed, or rather obliterated, when a junior Minister patronisingly told the old to dress up like Mother Hubbard. The Government's message should have been that they would guarantee extra payments, but that unfortunate statement by the Minister showed that the Government do not understand or care, and that people are on their own. Of course, the Government proved in the Budget that they care for some people. There was a tax handout to Sir Ralph Halpern of £4,728 a week, which over a year is the price of severe weather payments for 49,171 people. The Government do care for the old and the cold, but they care 49,000 times as much for the super-rich.

We have frequently quoted the figure that, under the Labour Government, basic pensions increased in real terms by 20 per cent., whereas under this Government, basic pensions have increased by a mere 2 per cent. From a new look at the figures, we have discovered that the pensioners who are worse off have had no increase in income at all in real terms. A pensioner on income support now receives, in real terms, £1 less than in 1979. If we make comparisons between pensioners who are over 80 and the disabled now and then—even those who enjoy the higher pensioner premium—we find that the same difference exists. Those pensioners in greatest need have suffered a loss in income in real terms of £1 a week.

That scheme is crude and does not take into account fuel costs, which vary widely. Not all homes are adequately efficient thermally and not all people enjoy the same health. The elderly, the disabled and those young families will feel the cold coming in the next few weeks and are wondering what their reaction will be. Will the Government make another attempt to hold down the cost of benefit by discouraging people, or will we hear from the Government tonight suggestions for really improving the scheme? If we do not, fuel poverty will intensify in depth and extent.

I have had letters from constituents about the matter, as I am sure many other hon. Members have. One letter says:

"Yes, I have central heating"—

many elderly people enjoy central heating now—

"but I took a drop in income in April and with inflation, which doubled the drop, I cannot afford to put the heating on."

Unless the Government have a serious policy—rather than one that is mainly ornamental—to tackle the great winter cull caused by fuel poverty, there will be even more deaths in the future. We look forward to hearing about the Government's new policies.

10.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), who has had a busy evening, on his skilful speech. He wisely said little about the amendment regulations against which the Opposition are praying, except to take credit for them, rather eccentrically. However, his approval is welcome. No one would have known from his speech, which inveighed against the Government for parsimony, that the

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

last Labour Government had no effective scheme for giving extra help to the least well-off in times of severe weather.

The regulations extend to more people the provisions contained in the regulations laid before the House on 7 October. As the hon. Gentleman has said so little about them, the House may find it helpful if I spend a few minutes describing what they do. The amendment regulations, coupled with the earlier regulations, make extra cash available to vulnerable people receiving income support, who have less than £500 capital, to help them to pay their heating bills during any very cold spells this winter.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Why do the Government insist on continuing with the £500 limit?

Mr. Lloyd: Because we wish to direct the help to those with the most limited means. That is the fairest way of doing it. Those with more capital have a cushion with which to meet any extra payments. Does the hon. Lady deny that that helps to direct the scheme to those who need it most?

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Minister must know, as do all hon. Members who hold constituency surgeries, that old people keep £500 against their funeral costs, and hold it sacrosanct. That £500 disqualifies them from receiving the severe weather payments that he is trying—as we are all trying—to enable them to receive.

Mr. Lloyd: It does not disqualify them. They may disqualify themselves if they hold that view, but most do not. They have the resources; we are directing the scheme towards those who do not. We are continuing that additional help—which the Government have provided in one form or another for the last few years, but which their Labour predecessor did not match—for those members of society most likely to worry about using extra heating during any spell of unusually cold winter weather.

The help, of course, is over and above the provision made via income support for normal heating expenses. Indeed, all the money paid out in previous years as heating additions—£417 million in the year ending last March—has been included in the income support allowances and premiums. That £417 million, as I am sure that the hon. Member for Newport, West knows, is some 55 per cent. more in real terms than his party was paying out in heating additions in 1978-79.

What is more, the heating additions that the Labour Government did pay failed to reach some 30 per cent. of pensioners on supplementary benefit. Whether that was because they did not qualify or because they could not find their way through the byzantine regulations the hon. Member for Newport, West may like to tell us when he winds up for the Opposition. What I think that he cannot tell us is that that 30 per cent. did not include many who need extra assistance in exceptionally cold weather. Nor can he deny that since last April that £417 million is being redirected automatically through the premiums to all in the vulnerable groups on income support.

The new regulations bring forward and significantly extend the scheme that was operated successfully——

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Will the Minister confirm that the paragraph that he has just read to the House itself confirms—albeit in the subtext—that what the Government did to heating additions last April was abolish them in their entirety?

Mr. Lloyd: No. What they did was include them in another form in the premiums that went automatically to the vulnerable groups. The hon. Gentleman knows, as do all his hon. Friends who have truly studied the matter, that the various additions did not always reach those whom they were intended to reach and who would have benefited from them, because they were complex and because they operated under various rules. Those who received them would have had them back through the various premiums.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I am sorry to challenge the Minister again, but he has said twice that no such scheme of payments existed under the previous Labour Government. If he looks back, he will discover that a scheme—a better scheme—did exist under that Government. The only justification for his statement, which I have also heard the Prime Minister make—although I accept that the matter may not have been explained to him in its entirety—is that the present Government redefined the scheme as one that operated only in exceptionally severe weather, to reduce its scope. That is the only justification for saying that the scheme is unique. It is actually a worse scheme than the one operated by his predecessor.

Mr. Lloyd: What the hon. Lady has not told us is what that scheme was. Perhaps she or one of her colleagues will do so. As far as I know—I look forward to hearing from Opposition Members—in times of particularly severe weather the scheme gave insubstantial amounts to those who were most vulnerable.

Mrs. Beckett: Yes. Payments were made under the single payment regulations when there was prolonged severe weather.

Mr. Lloyd: That scheme did exist. That is why I said that there was no effective scheme, not that there was no scheme at all. As the hon. Lady knows, payments for exceptionally severe weather were negligible. If she can give me figures that demonstrate otherwise, I shall be very interested to hear them. But I chose my words carefully, and I think that they will stand up to close examination, in relation both to what happens under our scheme and what happened when the Opposition were in power.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): As my hon. Friend will know, I have not always agreed with the Government's policy on pensioners. But, in fairness to my hon. Friend—and I wish to congratulate the Government on these measures—is it not a fact that 10 years ago we were spending approximately £100 million a year on all forms of heating additions, whereas in the last financial year we spent well in excess of £400 million? That must be a positive step forward, although there is still a great deal more to be done.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right in the first three quarters of his statement and he can make a good case for the last quarter, which no doubt he will do when he makes his speech.

The new regulations link entitlement to the income support pensioner premiums, thereby allowing men and

women aged 60 to 64 to qualify for the first time. They also provide for people receiving a disability premium, or families which include a child entitled to a child disability premium to qualify, affording continued provision for those most vulnerable because of ill health.

We have deliberately kept the arrangements as simple as possible by linking entitlement to these straightforward criteria. This has the advantage of making the rules easy for people to understand and for our local offices to operate. It also has an added advantage, as income support makes no distinction—unlike supplementary benefit—between householders and non-householders. Consequently, under the new regulations non-householders on income support will qualify for help for the first time.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I appreciate what the Minister said about simplicity, because it is on the grounds of alleged lack of simplicity that he has never been sympathetic to the question I have put many times about the wind chill factor. If the Minister has difficulty in trying to cope with meteorological data, would it not be simpler to designate various areas of the country that have a record of more severe weather and allow higher increments for the payments in those areas?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think so. The shape of the scheme is such that in areas of the country with more severe weather the trigger will be activated more often. Therefore, there will be more payments. The scheme is sensitive to the areas of the country with, on average, colder weather than elsewhere.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): My constituency rests in the Pennines, and our weather station is in Leeds. Many of the communities that house elderly people and families are well above the snow line and the Leeds weather centre does not reflect that cold weather. Wind chill is relevant when one is on a housing estate on the top of a hill in the Pennines, and Leeds is lower down.

Mr. Lloyd: I cannot confess to knowing the hon. Lady's constituency well enough——

Mrs. Mahon: The Minister should know.

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think that I should. There are 63 weather stations throughout the country and they were chosen to give the best representation for the area they serve. I heard what the hon. Lady said, and I shall take note of her point. I will be in touch with her at a later date. I cannot rebut her point at the Disptach Box now.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister reflect on the fact that it is possible to assess the wind chill factor for any point in the country? It is done in other countries, including the United States and many eastern European countries where winters are very cold. Can he not simply instruct his officials in the Department that henceforth the wind chill factor as well as the ordinary temperature should be the deciding factors in whether the trigger is activated? Simply using the temperature clearly understates the cold weather in which many elderly people suffer.

Mr. Lloyd: The best guide to temperature and the need for extra fuel use is the air temperature, not the wind chill. That is an added complication which could make it much more difficult to determine how payments should be made, without being any fairer. In many respects it would be less fair, because wind chill affects differently the top and bottom of a building and varies according to the direction in which a building faces. If one were to operate that system fairly, as I am sure the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) would, it would have to be far more complicated than he suggested and, ultimately, it would be less fair. I am certain that the air temperature is the best guide.

The hon. Member for Newport, West wants to put in place of this simple but responsive and fair scheme a much more wide-ranging winter premium which, if I understood him aright, should be paid regardless of whether the winter is cold or mild and regardless of whether the individual lives in an area that is experiencing the worst of the winter or an area that is faring comparatively well.

I fear that such a proposal would not be seen to be meeting the particular cold weather need, because such a premium would quickly come to be regarded as part of normal benefit. Inevitably, those people suffering the worst of any winter weather would claim—on grounds of common equity, wind chill or some other factor—some additional benefit in recognition of their special need for extra heating.

Such calls would be entirely logical. They are met now by the provision that we are debating but which the hon. Member for Newport, West wants to change and which, technically, he is praying against. Moreover, the introduction of a winter premium would, as he rightly remarked, cause considerable administrative difficulty, because provision for only part of the year would oblige large numbers of claimants to float on and then float off benefit—hardly the sort of simplification of the system that we have tried to achieve through the social security reforms.

There is no doubt that the hon. Gentleman would have great difficulty in explaining to claimants why their benefit was being reduced each April, just when benefit rates for others were being increased, especially to those on solid fuel who stock up for winter during the summer and pay the bills then.

Mr. Flynn: I mentioned a winter premium only to illustrate the embarrassing problems that the Government face. I regret that the Minister is not treating this matter with the seriousness it deserves. There are 40,000 extra deaths in the winter. We have made a number of suggestions to the Minister. This matter is of great importance and it deserves a better response from him, rather than the political point-scoring in which he is now engaging.

Mr. Lloyd: The point-scoring has come from Opposition Members. The bills come in after the payments have been made. The hon. Gentleman said he mentioned the winter premium in passing, as it were. Perhaps I am taking the issue too seriously by replying to it. Certainly I am taking it seriously because I appreciate that, as an idea, it has superficial attraction to people other than those who think carefully about what it would imply.

The changes that we are making are all beneficial and practical. They double the potential number of payments that might be made under the scheme this year as compared with that which operated last year. As a result, we would expect to pay out a potential maximum of £10

[Mr. Lloyd]

million in a single week this winter should the whole country experience very cold weather, as opposed to a cost of £4·7 million under the same regulations last year.

Those changes also ensure that arrangements for making claims this winter will continue to be straightforward. I believe that if there are many more claims, they can be met administratively most efficiently, contrary to the suspicions that the hon. Member for Newport, West has voiced. Notices will be placed in local newspapers telling people whenever a weather station records temperatures that trigger payments. The notices will include a simple application form which may be completed and sent to the local office. The simplicity of that is illustrated by the fact that, once a payment has been made as a result of such a claim, no further claim is necessary for the rest of the winter and payments will automatically be made for any subsequent spells of cold weather.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Minister did not seem to appreciate in his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) the point that we are making, which is that, even in the sort of weather we have been having this winter—not freezing—large numbers of pensioners and others are finding it almost impossible adequately to heat their accommodation because they do not have sufficient money. That certainly applies to those on income support and those living at the poverty or near-poverty level.

Mr. Lloyd: We debated those points in the hon. Gentleman's Adjournment debate just before Christmas. I do not want to debate them again, but I stress that income support levels are set so that they are sufficient to meet normal heating costs. We are now discussing extra costs in exceptional weather. That is what the scheme is designed for; it does it well and efficiently.

As well as making those substantial improvements, we are promoting the scheme widely in co-operation with a number of voluntary bodies. The hon. Member for Newport, West mentioned the "keep warm, keep well" campaign which we are organising with Help the Aged, Neighbourhood Energy Action and Age Concern. The campaign is to increase public awareness about the need for people to take the proper precautions to keep warm during very cold weather. It is a mark of the success of the initiative—however attention was drawn to it—that the subject has already generated such public debate so early in the winter.

We have taken the opportunity to tell people about the social fund cold weather payments in the publicity which has been given to the "keep warm, keep well" campaign in England and Wales and the "keep warm this winter" campaign in Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned the very worrying problem of excess winter mortality. Excess winter mortality has shown a welcome decline during the past 30 years. If he draws political lessons from those statistics, perhaps he would like to comment on the fact that there was an upward movement during the last Labour Government, but the downward trend has been resumed and is continuing. However, the number of excess deaths—some 35,000 each year—is still far too high. We are very pleased that the Medical Research Council is undertaking a study to report to the Government where it would be worth while for additional research to be carried out so that the problem can be understood and effectively tackled.

Clearly, it is not just a matter of money, although that might be the case if one compared the amount spent on heating and conditions under the last Labour Government with what is spent now. Some of the research shows that if one compares the mortality rates among elderly people in accommodation where there is full central heating and there is no penalty if the heating is on all the time with those who have to watch their fuel costs more carefully and sharply, there is no difference in mortality. It is perfectly clear that some problems arise when elderly people go out not dressed warmly enough for the winter.

I make no apology for saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was right to suggest that one thing that elderly people could do in their own interests was to dress up warmly for the winter. It is a great pity that Opposition Members jeered and scoffed at that, helping to lose the important message that she was conveying.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does the Minister agree that dressing up warmly is also a question of money, and that a really good warm winter coat is very expensive? Is is not ironic that councils are trying hard to install central heating, but some pensioners with central heating are still huddled over their gas ovens in the kitchen because they are afraid of the bills? Would it not make more sense for the Government's campaign if pensioners knew that when the temperature and the wind chill factor —which should also be taken into account—triggers off a very cold spell, they should automatically get payment for every day?

If a bank can calculate interest on a daily basis, surely the Government can calculate payment for cold weather on a daily basis. If a pensioner lays out money for a cold spell that lasts six days and gets nothing back, he or she runs into debt. That is what they are afraid of. They should not have to be pauperised by savings of as little as £500. Any Government who are really serious about pensioners' health and mortality rates should take that into account.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Lady has made several points and will no doubt make them again if she joins in the debate. In answer to her first point, many elderly people can dress much more warmly than they think with the clothes that they already have. Although I agree that a new coat can be quite expensive, not everybody necessarily needs to wear new clothes to keep warm.

Mrs. Mahon: Must the elderly use jumble sales, then?

Mr. Lloyd: Well, many people do. I am a great attender of second-hand clothes sales for charities in my constituency. One can get very good bargains at them.

Mr. Winnick: For Tory Members of Parliament.

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, and for anybody else who cares to go.

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: Before I conclude, I shall give way again, because I have given way to other hon. Members.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I know that time is getting on. However, I have been puzzling for some time about in what possible way the inclusion of the wind chill factor could make the system

less fair. Surely the Minister is not suggesting that it could produce a situation where people who qualify under the existing scheme would not qualify if the wind chill factor were taken into account. For many people the wind chill factor has a real effect—making their homes and lives colder. It is real and measurable, so at the very least, will the Minister say that he will look into the matter? That would be one small concession, but we would appreciate it far more if he were willing to take that factor fully into account.

Mr. Lloyd: I did look into that and can only repeat that the most significant factor in all this is air temperature, not wind chill. That is why we have not included the wind chill factor—although the administrative problems are very real as well.

The regulations are generous, and make the payments more widely available. They are more sensitive to sudden changes in temperature than were last year's arrangements, and they offer real help to those most at risk. I therefore commend them to the House.

[Mr. Lloyd]

10.52 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Many of us who had hoped that we would see a change of attitude from the Minister must be extremely disappointed by his remarks. Although we recommended the changes that come about in this statutory instrument, some of his remarks were appalling and insulting to the elderly and the handicapped in our community. The idea that our elderly population —people who have worked all their lives, earning a decent living and trying to save for their old age—should somehow be condemned to the second-hand shops for their winter woolies is despicable from a Government Department, and I am extremely distressed by it.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I am sure that the hon. Lady will readily concede that many elderly people have to shop in second-hand shops and, because they have lived through the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties, have a history of shopping in such shops to find warm clothes. The hon. Lady, myself and many other hon. Members, have visited elderly people who sit huddled around one-bar fires dressed in such clothes. Is that what the Minister seeks to perpetuate?

Mrs. Ewing: I am in total agreement with my hon. Friend. As one who has canvassed over the years in various inner cities as well as rural areas, I have come across many such instances and, sadly, I do not find that the numbers are declining. It is a terrible condemnation of our society that, in the latter part of the 20th century, people should still live in such circumstances.

The Government are tinkering around the edges of a very real problem and are not taking full cognizance of the effects of their own legislation. Trying to score political points in this issue is a false move on their part. It would be much better if we saw a radical approach to trying to safeguard our elderly, weak and handicapped.

We welcome the alteration of the seven-day regulation, because it was ludicrous to expect weather conditions to fit into a neat regular pattern. We very much welcome that, and we appreciate, too, the fact that we shall now see families with children up to the age of five included in the regulations, because that will take account of all the under-school-age children.

Nonetheless, there are major criticisms. One of the reasons for the prayer is to give us a real opportunity to lay before the Government the Opposition's deep concerns —and, I believe, those of some Conservative Members —about how we deal with our climatic conditions. I believe, for example, that the £5 payment takes no account of rising fuel costs. The notional fuel element, which is included in the old housing benefit regulations, indicated a minimum of £8·80 per week to take account of fuel costs to keep a house warm and to ensure that there were adequate supplies of hot water and cooking facilities. The £5 payment obviously comes nowhere near meeting those needs.

Likewise, the £500 capital limit, about which I intervened during the Under-Secretary's earlier comments, is seen by many people as an insult to the independence and the dignity of many pensioners who have saved that sum of money as a way of meeting their funeral costs. It is not good enough for the Government to say that they are trying to target, because they are missing the target. If they were to move the £500 limit up substantially, we might then accept that they were trying to target effectively. However, the limit of £500 savings is a minimum sum. It is a sum which nowadays means nothing to most people, but to the pensioners £500 often represents their life savings from their poor wages.

I am from a family where my mother took out the penny-a-week Prudential insurance policy to save for her funeral, so that she would not feel that in death she would be a burden to her family. That may seem to us strange, but it is the reality in which many elderly people find themselves. To set the limit at £500 is to deny the efforts that those people have made to save over the years to ensure that they give their family—in death as well as in life—the kind of opportunities they did not have. They do not want to be a burden in death, and the £500 limit is a gross insult.

I reject, too, the idea that there should be a regressive claim for severe weather payments. What we need is a progressive attitude, which ensures that the payments are there before the cold weather arrives. When the first frosts come or the first snow falls, we must ensure that people can turn on their fires, or put extra coal on their fires, or switch on their gas heating, or use whatever their source of fuel may be, and not have to worry about whether they will be able to meet the bill at the end of the day. We would especially like to see the regressive aspect of the claim removed.

The Under-Secretary spoke about 63 places of measurement of temperature for severe weather payments. I represent a constituency which contains Tomintoul, the highest village in Scotland, and the whole area of the Braes of Glenlivet, which are perhaps better known to many people as a source of the golden liquid of Scotland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Inner warmth."] These are very cold areas. While hon. Members joke about the inner warmth, I assure them that the outer cold in those areas is especially severe.

I point out to the House that the measurement of the temperatures in those areas are not taken at Aviemore, which would be the logical place, but on the coastline, where the temperatures are, naturally, much warmer. We must look at the 63 places of measurement—a point made, too, by the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon)—if we are to take account of the real climatic conditions in which many people find themselves.

These regulations also do not take account of the realities of the climatic conditions. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) mentioned the wind chill factor. The Under-Secretary has said that we only need to worry about exceptional as opposed to normal conditions. Normal conditions must be taken into account, because the prevailing climatic conditions are significant to people's health during the winter months.

Scotland accounts for 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom population, but 25 per cent. of deaths from hypothermia are recorded in Scotland. That reflects the effects of Scotland's prevailing weather conditions, the wind chill factor, the dampness and so on. People's health is affected by such weather and it is unnecessary for them to suffer the severe weather conditions that are the subject of this debate, and thus become ill. The Government have failed to take account of those prevailing weather conditions.

We in the SNP have suggested that there should be an overall cold climate allowance that would take account of

the climatic conditions from the north of the United Kingdom to the south. Tapering payments should be made during the winter months to all those who receive income support, to pensioners and to the handicapped. We believe that that is the best way forward.

In Glasgow it is 20 per cent. more expensive to heat a house than in Bristol; in Aberdeen it is 30 per cent. more expensive. Sometimes such figures underestimate the problems. Recently the Department of Energy published "Degree Days" figures which suggested that a house in Aberdeen would need 50 per cent. more heat to achieve the same average internal heat as a house in Bristol.

A cold climate allowance that took into account the varying climatic conditions from north to south would ensure that people need not worry about heating their homes and would ensure that they were not left in a ridiculous situation.

I am conscious that other hon. Members wish to speak and my final plea is that the Government consider the standing charges imposed by the gas and electricity boards. I met an elderly widower at a recent surgery—I shall not give his name—and his basic charge for electricity in a quarter was 83p. One wonders how on earth a pensioner had such a basic charge. His standing charge, however, was £8·44. I asked him what he did with his days to try to keep warm. He told me that he walked around a supermarket, he went into a cafe for a cup of tea and stayed there for many hours. That was his alternative to sitting at home and having to put on an electric fire, which he might not be able to afford. The Government should take up the removal of the standing charges directly with the boards, and they should do so forthwith, because it is important.

If an automatic allowance was given to all pensioners and those with handicapped relatives within their families, the Government could achieve major savings. I noted that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was here earlier. I hope that he was not here to carry out a penny-pinching exercise. We impose burdens on our Health Service by allowing people to develop illnesses such as bronchitis and other chest diseases that are associated with winter cold. Often, such diseases result in death. Major savings to the Health Service could be achieved if people were not placed in circumstances where they are prey to such diseases.

I believe that we have a moral obligation to speak out, given that, compared with the rest of Europe, we have the highest number of deaths as a result of cold-related illnesses during the winter months. That is a terrible condemnation of our present system, and all sides of the House should sincerely fight against it.

11.4 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Three things, I think, are in juxtaposition. First, I have the opportunity yet again to explain to hon. Members and others where Langbaurgh is. Secondly, it is actually two months after this affair should have first been debated, and one has to thank God that during the two months we have not had cold weather. Thirdly, it actually identifies and epitomises the way in which bureaucracy runs Governments, whichever party is in power, because the research notes provided by the Library tell me that there are no data available on the frequency and amounts paid during the period of the last Labour Government. They have not even kept the records, so whether they paid any or not is a matter which the Library certainly does not know about.

I wanted to catch your eye this evening, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would have sought to catch the eye of Mr. Speaker two months ago, although the debate finished in the early hours of the morning, and one would not have been very popular getting up and speaking at 3 am on the cold weather payments and keeping colleagues here. Langbaurgh is a marvellous place. Few people know where it is. Few people besides those from this House who ventured there are aware that Langbaurgh is in the north-east of England.

One lot of people who apparently do know where it is are those responsible for drawing up the lists of the areas which will be conditioned by the cold weather should it come about, but it is not straightforward for the whole of Langbaurgh; it is split. I cannot understand how one can justify the fact that, in an area as small as one's constituency, people on one side of the road can have additional payments because it is jolly cold and people on the other side of the road cannot because it is not quite so jolly cold.

The Government have got themselves hooked—one might say something a little ruder about something twisted—on RAF cold weather points for choosing weather stations. Why choose Leeming for Langbaurgh? Why choose Whitby for Langbaurgh? Both are considerably further south than Langbaurgh. Would it not have been better to choose somewhere further north? We might have had the natural benefit of the fact that it is normally colder in the north than in the south, but it did not fit the bureaucratic mind; bureaucracy has to be satisfied.

I had a look to see how this expressed itself in the north of England generally. I find that an area way up into Northumberland is covered by the RAF station at Leeming. Let anyone try to tell the good people of Northumberland that the temperatures and weather up there are exactly the same as the temperatures and weather down in RAF Leeming.

Of course, if one reads the regulations very carefully, one sees that the Government pride themselves on having moved away from the Monday-to-Sunday scenario to a seven-day rolling scenario; but there is that little sting in the tail—that if any one day in the average period under review counts as exceptionally cold, and then becomes slightly warmer, it then does not count. There might be five very cold days, then two days which happen to take the average temperature up a little bit, followed by another five days of very cold weather. Over 12 days, my constituents will have had extremely cold weather. RAF Leeming may have had two days when it was not quite so cold, but no one gains any benefit.

I wonder what kudos the Government expect to gain from this, because they are gradually, slowly, inexorably being dragged through the bureaucratic mess to a common-sense solution. And what is that common-sense solution? I will tell my hon. Friend. Last year, it was darn cold in this country, cold almost everywhere, to the point that even in this place it was freezing cold. Every Member on every side said to the Minister, "You cannot live with these regulations. You have got to give the cold weather payment." What happened? The Minister gave it. Despite all the rules and regulations, the pressure from hon. Members on all sides of the House made him change his mind.

[Mr. Richard Holt]

The regulations came into force in 1985. They were amended in 1986 and 1987. They should have been amended in 1988; they are about to be amended in 1989. Eventually, however, the Government will recognise the reality of the world outside this place and say to themselves, "We intend to live no longer according to what the bureaucrats say; we shall live in the real world, where Members of Parliament are to be found."

We realise that 90 per cent. of civil servants are to be found throughout the country—Customs and Excise officers, those who work in Department of Social Security offices and all the others—but all the policy advisers and policy makers live in the south of England. They never go to the north of England; they do not understand about the north of England. Consequently, they devise regulations that will never affect them.

The regulations are an improvement: seven days, on a rolling basis, instead of being based on Monday to Sunday, is better; children under five instead of children under two is better, and zero deg instead of minus 1·5 deg is better. So why not face up to the responsibilities of office and say that, when it is cold in this country, it is cold all over the country, instead of seeking to say, as these pettifogging, bureaucratically led regulations say, that lists of parishes shall be identified—sometimes two houses and a pub?

Somebody has taken thousands of hours of bureaucratic time drawing up these lists. When I asked whether I could be provided with a map, the official reply was that no map was available but that the Department had a map that was not in a form that could be photocopied. If the map is not in such a form, I have to ask: what the hell form is it in? Why cannot hon. Members have a look at it and show it to their constituents?

My hon. Friend the Minister, who read his civil servants' brief so beautifully, said that our constituents will know when the cold weather trigger applies to them. Poppycock. They will not know when the trigger applies to them. Does the Minister expect each of my constituents in one half of my constituency who fall into this category to phone RAF Leeming or, if they live in the other half of my constituency, to phone RAF Whitby and say, "I think I have a right to put in a claim"? That is bureaucratic nonsense. It is time that the Government faced up to this responsibility and recognised that, when exceptionally cold weather occurs, we do not have to be told by a junior ex-Minister to put on an extra vest; we do it for ourselves. We know when exceptionally severe weather occurs.

Why, therefore, are we even debating the regulations this evening? They are an improvement, but would it not have been far better if the Government had adopted a more generous attitude, although not in terms of money? It will depend on the weather. Even the Treasury cannot control the weather.

The amount of money that has been spent on cold weather payments each year has been increased from £2 million to £5 million and then to £11 million. If we tried to find that amount in the small print of the annual outturn figures, I bet that we should spend hours in the Library trying to find it.

One wonders how much money the Government have set aside for the cold weather payment. Is it £10 million, is it £20 million, or is it £200 million? Who knows? I can guarantee two things: the Treasury will have it lower than it should be and the Minister responsible will not have a clue what it should be.

Why do the Government not face up to reality and say to themselves, "Cold weather is an exceptional thing; we do not want the elderly, the sick and children to die because of an inconvenience"? I must make a personal plea for my constituency. I notice that, among the categories so far excluded, are the long-term unemployed, of whom I have too many, with children who are over five years of age. One of the worst categories in which one can find oneself in this country is that of people who are trapped as long-term unemployed and have growing children who are over five. No provision is made for them.

That is an aside from the thrust of my main argument —that the scheme should be simpler and more generous in that there should be no pettifogging regulations tied to parishes. We should look at Scotland and perhaps divide it east-west and north-south. I do not know too much about Scotland, but I can tell my hon. Friend the Minister that, if it is cold in Newcastle, it is cold in Hartlepool and Langbaurgh. The elderly do not feel any difference if it is 0·9 deg cold or 1·1 deg cold; in either case, it is cold. We should take a broader brush. I promise the House that the Government will reconsider the regulations before many moons have passed. They will be forced to do so by power from the Back Benches.

Few Back Benchers are present at this time of night, and few will read my speech in *Hansard;* I would not ask them to do that, even as a punishment. I may have put the case in a slightly light-hearted way because I have often found that that is the best way to get one's point across, but these regulations are tight, bureaucratic and nonsense. I urge my hon. Friend to take the plaudits for what the Government have done. This provision is more generous and better than any previous Government have done. We have not received enough praise for what we have done in this context, but, if there had been a small move further forward, we would not have had this debate this evening. We could all have gone home half an hour ago, thankful that the Government's generosity has been recognised.

11.17 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Surely the Minister cannot convince us that this scheme has been a success. It is sad and disappointing that a Minister of his calibre should tell us to advise our constituents to go to jumble sales. I shall advise my constituents to go to jumble sales when I know to which jumble sales the Prime Minister sends her clothes.

The days of the army and navy stores are all well past. I was embarrassed going to school as a Japanese general; we do not want to go back to those days. It is nonsense to impose this £500 limit. We all know that it takes £1,000 and more to bury a pensioner. Pensioners live in this world without dignity and they do not want to die without it, but that is what will happen as a result of this crude scheme.

How can the Minister say that the scheme is a success when 40,000 people die from cold and hypothermia? The scheme cannot be a success when half a million people do not file a claim. There is considerable concern at the moment because, since the change in the social security system, people have become more vulnerable. The system of transitional payments has not been taken up. Some people who applied months ago have received no

payments. If people do not claim, they do not get paid. In deprived areas, such as my constituency of Provan, surely they should not have to sit down on a winter's day and fill in a form to get a miserable £5 a week. The £5 payment should be doubled at least.

The people who receive the benefit are the most vulnerable in society. They are on the margins of supplementary benefit. Why, then, is the Minister not compassionate and why does he not include pensioners who are receiving housing benefit and are on the margins for supplementary benefit? The Government may say that they do not know the numbers involved, but in the early 1980s one of the biggest authorities in Scotland, Strathclyde, made them well aware of that. A fuel poverty committee was set up and during one of our coldest winters it ran around distributing barometers to pensioners so that they did not die of hypothermia.

Mr. Holt: Thermometers.

Mr. Wray: I could not afford a barometer, but obviously the hon. Gentleman may know about them.

We should set up a special committee to look into cold weather payments and, instead of asking people to fill in forms, we should say that if it is cold enough, they qualify, and give them the payments.

11.21 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): To feel cold and to be cold is always unpleasant, and that must be true for the elderly. A significant number of pensioners find it difficult to keep their homes warm. There are many reasons for that and they are not all related to money or to what is available through the present system. But every estimate and survey consistently reveals that about 50 per cent. of our pensioners are living in under-heated homes, so we must accept, as I know my hon. Friend the Minister does, that there is a real problem.

It is a pity that during this debate there has not been a more generous response from the Opposition about what has been achieved in the past 10 years because we have taken a substantial step forward compared with the 1970s. To that extent I warmly congratulate the Government on the major improvements in the heating cost provisions, but there is still a great deal to be done. With full computerisation now in the process of coming into operation for identifying the financial position of our 10 million pensioners, we should be able to bring into place systems which will act much more efficiently and ensure that those who need additional resources but who are not claiming them, receive them.

Tonight nobody has commented on the 1 million or so pensioners who are not claiming income support when they could do so. Because of that those people lose out on heating additions. Can the Minister tell the House that, when the system is fully in place, his Department will be able to identify all those who receive only the basic pension and should be claiming income support—[HON. MEMBERS: "It has."]—more clearly and specifically than now?

If that is the case—and I shall be interested to hear the Minister's comments—we are obligated to ensure that people receive not just heating additions but income support, and to find out why 1 million of them have not been claiming it. In that way, we shall ensure that those at the very lowest end of the scale, who currently receive only a basic pension, will also be given income support and heating additions, and will benefit under the new measure before the House.

The time is coming when we must think in terms of automatic payments. I give full credit to the Government for the progress that has been made. In past years, one had to claim for every specific period for which one might be entitled to heating benefit. Now, one claims only once, which ensures that payments will automatically be made for the rest of the year, as and when the appropriate terms are met. But automatic payments should continue not just for one year but for the year after also, so that those entitled to payments will continue receiving them, even if they forget to claim again. That will steadily eliminate the number not in receipt of their full entitlements.

I strongly support the appeals made by a number of hon. Members in respect of the existing £500 limit. I say to my hon. Friend that it is not good enough. The wartime generation of pensioners in particular have saved and put aside a sum of money for their funerals—and they will go without food, heating and clothing rather than touch those savings. Many of them incorrectly believe that, if they cannot pay for their funeral, they will have a pauper's burial.

Only a few months ago, an elderly constituent well into her eighties told me that she will never touch her £500 savings because she believes if she dies in Brighton without that money to ensure that she will be properly buried—"to give me the right send off," she said—she will be put in a cardboard box. I eventually managed to convince her that that is not true, but for every case that we hear about, there are 100 more who believe the same. Those pensioners insist on keeping £500 aside, but they are placed in an unfair situation as a result, in respect of their entitlement to cold weather payments.

I beg the Minister to reconsider that aspect as soon as possible and to twist the arm of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend is no longer in the Chamber, but we understand the pressures on all Ministers. Nevertheless, I hope that the Minister will twist my right hon. Friend's arm severely, to see whether he can at least raise the savings limit from £500 to £1,000, which will be a good start to increasing the sum still higher in the future.

We must never be satisfied until there is 100 per cent. take-up of social security entitlements, and until every pensioner has a warm and comfortable home.

11.28 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am always grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), because his record of speaking up in the House for pensioners' rights is well known. I also have the pleasure of serving under him on the all-party pensions committee. I respond to his opening remarks by acknowledging that these are welcome changes, as other right hon. and hon. Members will also recognise. However, as the hon. Member for Kemptown said later, much more can be done.

The additional resources that the changes make available are not very significant. I was interested to hear the Under-Secretary say that the amount devoted to severe weather payments, if calculated on a national basis, is

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

increased from £4·7 million to £10 million. What rate of take-up does the Department presume in arriving at that figure?

At any rate, much more can and should be done. The Government have the power by regulation—not a difficult thing in this place—to increase the size of the groups who qualify, and the range of climatic conditions that allow cold weather payments to be made. They should use that power more generously than they have in the past. Present income support levels are not adequate to cope with extended severe weather. That has been agreed on both sides of the House.

Statistics have been passed to and fro across the Chamber about the impact of severe weather, particularly on pensioners. Hon. Members have spoken about the unacceptable numbers of deaths from hypothermia. I agree, but many of our pensioners, especially those of the war generation, also find their life-styles restricted by the severe weather in a way that leads to a loss of dignity and many other problems. Those in the lowest 20 per cent. income group had to increase the proportion of disposable income that they devote to heating from 11 to 14 per cent. between 1979 and 1985—a significant increase.

Finally, I come to one or two improvements that could be made. The Government could easily reduce the seven-day qualifying period to three days. That would double the size of the eligible group. The Minister should bear that in mind as a possible future improvement to the scheme. I endorse the arguments that have been made for automatic payments. There should be better temperature monitoring, too. It is possible for ordinary mortals to measure temperature; we do not need meteorological experts to do it. Local offices of the DHSS should be able to do it independently, and to make the scheme more sophisticated by including, for example, wind chill factors. The Department should give that careful consideration.

As the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) reminded the House, the Minister has a residual power, which he used last year, which he should exercise more liberally to declare severe weather payment periods. He should be prepared to use it, and to tell the House of his intention to do so.

As has been said, £5 is inadequate. When will it be uprated? The payment has stayed at that amount for a number of years and its value has been eroded by increases in the retail prices index. I agree, too, that the level of capital disregard is too low, at £500. The hon. Member for Kemptown was right to make an eloquent plea that it should be raised immediately to £1,000. That is the only fair way in which to deal with people who suffer real hardship and to provide for heating costs without eating into their nest eggs for funeral bills. The Government should do more, which is not to say that I do not welcome the fine print in the regulations.

11.33 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The debate has rightly focused on the pressures on the elderly during the winter. The Government's record of helping vulnerable groups such as the elderly with heating their homes is lamentable. Not one Conservative Back Bencher was able to commend the Government's record unreservedly.

The regulations help few of the 14,700 senior citizens in my constituency. One of those pensioners, Mr. Ian Christie, who died last weekend, sad to say, was a tireless worker for the elderly, and he would have been the first to remind the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary that £5 is a miserly sum. Just to keep pace with the 15 per cent. increase in the price of electricity that the Government have forced on consumers in the 13-month period that the debate covers, the £5 payment would have had to be increased to £5·75 a week. It has not been increased at all. The average fuel bills in my constituency are at least £16 a week and they often rise to as much as £30 a week. The £5 payment is quite inadequate to provide even minimal levels of heat for elderly people and it is an insult to suggest that it could. It is even less than the £5·55 weekly payments to hundreds of thousands of pensioners and others that the Government abolished last April.

The Opposition will not vote against the measure, because it incorporates two valuable Labour party amendments. However, the Under-Secretary has severely provoked us with his reference to elderly people being encouraged to go shopping for second-hand clothes. The plain truth is that the Government have abolished any help with payments to such elderly people with clothing and grants.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: No. The hon. Gentleman has had plenty of time for himself. I can say to him and his colleagues that I am proud of what the last Labour Government did for the elderly. I am proud of the electricity discount scheme which, in one week beginning 22 January 1979, paid £5 not only to a select group of claimants, but to all claimants. If that £5 were uprated for inflation, it would be worth almost double that amount. The matter did not rest there. Claimants whose bill exceeded £20 received for the quarter 25 per cent. of the extra payment made under the electricity discount scheme. That is the record of the Labour Government, which I am proud to defend.

It is time that the Government recognised the problem of hypothermia. It is time they introduced a proper scheme that would allow people to heat their homes, and it is time that they stopped freezing allowances for the poor to bolster the incomes of the rich.

11.38 pm

Mr. Flynn: By leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to dwell too much on the political battle that has been joined. However, it seems extraordinary that the Library does not possess details of the electricity discount scheme, under which £45 million a year was spent in 1979. It is entirely wrong to say that there were no cold weather payments under Labour, although that has often been repeated by the Government. It is simply untrue. The Supplementary Benefits Commission guidance for 1977 makes it clear that

"a lump sum payment can be made to help with the debt where there has been serious illness or prolonged severe weather leading to fuel consumption greater than normal."

So there were schemes.

However, the Government have ignored the main thrust of our argument, that fuel poverty is only one small part of general poverty. Tonight, we are talking only about a minuscule payment of £5—or perhaps £10—a year. There was boasting about the Government spending £400 million in additional payments at a time when, by severing

the link between earnings and pensions, they had robbed the pensioners not of £400 million, but of the enormous sum of £3 billion. That sum will run at £6·3 billion by next April. For the tiny amount of £10, we must take into account the £11 that is lost every week of the year by single pensioners and the £17.40 that is lost by pensioner couples.

The points made by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) are well understood. The system in the past was automatic. We have asked the Minister in a series of questions why that should not apply again. It makes so much sense. Why waste payments of £87,000 on advertising alone when all the information except one piece is already held on the computers in the Department? There is no need to go through a pile of files. The details can be flagged up on the computer, and the payment then sent out. The only information that the computers do not have is on those who have a capital sum of £500. They have information on those with a capital sum of £3,000, however, and the difference between the two is not very great.

As the hon. Member for Kemptown rightly pointed out, the nest egg that many pensioners have is very precious and important. It is wasteful and cruel that their allowances should be deducted because of that. The whole scheme of fivers and tenners is pathetic, paltry and ineffectual. As the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and many Opposition Members have said, the scheme is basically unworkable: it is far too complicated, and when put to a real test it collapsed under the weight of public ridicule of its complexity and all the contradictions within it.

As has been said, the wind chill factor is crucial. A public inauguration ceremony for an American president was cancelled, not because of the temperature but because of a combination of temperature and wind chill factor.

Sadly, the Minister's response tonight has been atrocious, but there have been constructive suggestions. Every hon. Member has emphasised the seriousness of the problem. We have listened in despair to a defence of the ill-judged comment of a junior Minister. It is still not understood that she told people to wear woolly bonnets when they went to bed to make them look fools while everyone else had comfortable central heating in their houses. The point about that statement is that it was patronising, sending pensioners in need the message: "We don't understand you and we don't really care. You are on your own." Tonight we have heard a repetition of that statement from this Minister, who answers that, although the scheme is paltry, wasteful and indefensible, what the old must do is go out and get clothing from jumble sales.

11.41 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: By leave of the House, I will reply to the debate. I was interested in the way that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) finished his speech. He started by claiming credit for changes that he said he welcomed, but during the evening he began an archaeological exercise to try to dig up a scheme that could be said to have operated under the last Labour Government, which brought special payments to vulnerable groups in times of really cold weather. In so far as he managed to disinter one, it seemed to me much more complicated and more difficult to follow and claim than the present one. Perhaps it was automatic, but only to some; not all fell into the correct category. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do a little more work on that, because Conservative Members do not understand what the scheme is for which he is trying to take credit. It seems that he discovered it himself only this evening.

Several Opposition Members made much of the fact that they do not consider a payment of £5 per week sufficient to meet fuel costs during spells of very cold weather. But the £5 is not meant to cover the entire cost of fuel. The help provided by the regulations is over and above the provision made via income support for normal heating expenses. The best estimates suggest that the average household spends about £11 a week throughout the year on fuel, light and power, of which about half represents heating costs. The extra £5 therefore provides very real help to vulnerable people with extra costs during cold spells.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) was in some confusion about what happened when the scheme was changed before. It is not just that the Minister changed his mind and decided to declare a general payment. The regulations were changed. They were changed so that the trigger would be activated when the temperature fell to 0 deg whereas previously it had been activated at minus 1·5 deg. Contrary to the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), the Minister has no power to alter the regulations at will. The regulations are as they appear on the Order Paper and I hope that the House will not pray against them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh also seemed to be suggesting that there should be the same payment——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question put and negatived.

Amusement Arcades

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of the gambling addiction that can affect young people who play amusement-with-prizes machines. I am pleased to have support from hon. Members on both sides of the House, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) who, I hope, will have the opportunity to intervene during the short debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for attending the debate and for his courtesy in receiving a delegation from Norwich on this subject last summer. We have also had further discussions since then.

The *Eastern Evening News* in Norwich has been running a series of strongly written and effective articles on the extent and nature of the addiction in Norwich and the surrounding area and the misery that can be suffered by families. The newspaper has referred to horror stories such as the mother at her wit's end who said that she was afraid her son might kill, the teenager who slashed his throat with a broken bottle to mask his shame over his addiction, and the woman who sobbed and said she still loved her husband but had to throw him out because of his gambling. Such stories have come to the fore in Norwich and elsewhere. This is a serious matter.

Although there have been many calls for reform of the Gaming Act 1968, I raise the issue again because I am convinced from interviews and research conducted in Norwich that the problem is real and serious. Arcade addiction is widespread nationally and has been the subject of much attention in the national press and on television. The experience of Mrs. Cindy Elliff in Norwich is typical. When speaking about her son, Simon, she said:

"Simon's personality changed . . . he changed into a sullen, mean and aggressive person . . . it was like living with a drug addict . . . you wouldn't see him for three or four days until he'd turn up filthy dirty and smelly, white and drawn because he'd had nothing to eat during the period he'd been away . . . he got funds wherever he could illegally. He has put the whole family in debt over this".

Disturbingly, I have had several similar tales from other parts of the country. Therefore, this problem is not associated just with Norwich or my constituency. It is a national problem. there is a story about a killing in Gwent which was associated with the problem and about a young boy, from the area close to that represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown, who committed suicide. There are stories from all over the country about the problems facing families.

Time does not allow me to quote from the many surveys that have been conducted, but a picture of truancy and deviant behaviour emerges. The trouble with surveys is that they finish up as statistics and we all know what can be done with those. I prefer case histories, and I have heard many of those. Norwich social workers have described behaviour ranging from borrowing money to child prostitution. Many cases go unreported because families, not surprisingly, wish to protect their children. A child psychiatrist in Norwich confirmed that the problem is widespread; she said that it is better to reduce the opportunities for children to develop the gambling addiction than to treat them afterwards. After all, the same argument applies to alcohol or any other addiction.

The question we must debate tonight is whether a change in the law is called for. I believe it is, and I hope the Minister will discuss this, not only tonight but in future, and will keep the question of a possible tightening of the law under review and will keep an open mind on this matter.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): As the amusement trade has itself said that there should be legislation, that should have great influence on the Government in introducing a Bill. Until legislation is introduced, it is vital—I know that this is the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)—that there should be the closest co-operation between the industry and local authorities in each area in operating voluntary control schemes.

Mr. Thompson: I agree, and there is increasing, sensible and well-thought-out pressure for a tightening of the law and for such legislation. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) in his place. I am aware of his keen interest in this subject.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollock): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when somebody under the age of 18 is found gambling in an amusement arcade, the owner of the premises should be held responsible, that a financial penalty should be imposed on him and that, should he continue to allow people under 18 to gamble on his premises, his licence should be revoked?

Mr. Thompson: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I am aware that he has a Bill of his own that he intends to present to the House. His thinking is along similar lines to mine and many others.

Some local authorities have expressed concern, and a dialogue with the Home Office has clarified their powers to an extent. Although amusement-with-prizes machines can be removed from cafés, fish and chip shops and so on, attempts to stop the spread of arcades have met with remarkably little success. Under schedule 9 to the 1968 Act, operators must apply for permits to local authorities, and planning permission must also be obtained from them. If either is refused, the applicant is entitled to appeal, and of course planning control cannot take moral considerations into account.

In a recent written question, the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority refusals of permission to open amusement arcades had been overturned on appeal by his Department. Replying, the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), said that, of 304 planning appeals involving amusement arcades decided since January 1984, the earliest date from which such information was available, 203 had been allowed. Those figures make the point more effectively than anything I might say.

Under the leadership of Westminster Councillor Robert Davis, more than 80 authorities have joined the Amusement Arcade Action Group, which was set up in 1983 to campaign for a change in the law. Many of them have wisely used the Home Office advice given in 1969, which states that an authority can refuse a permit on

grounds of social considerations. But this advice cannot be used in the courts, so many appeals result in victory for arcade owners.

Westminster city council has been ingenious in using its powers more effectively. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Brighton borough council is also pursuing a policy of zoning in the allocation of permits. In my area, Norwich city council is also concerned about the issue. So far, it has confined its energies to calling for a change in the law, but it too is striving to use its powers more effectively. I hope that the Minister will comment on that and add further advice for local authorities in my area.

Recent attempts to change the law include the Amusement Arcades Bill in 1983, introduced into the other place by Lord Campbell of Alloway; an attempt in 1984 to insert a clause into the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act; and attempts to amend the Criminal Justice Act 1988. All those attempts failed. Lord Campbell's Bill would have refused access to those under 16 unless they were accompanied by an adult, and extended local authority powers to impose conditions on arcades. It is interesting that that Bill passed through all its stages in the House of Lords, again demonstrating the pressure that exists for a reform and for a tightening of the law.

I acknowledge the fact that the British Amusement Catering Trade Association has introduced a code which instructs owners to prohibit entry to inland arcades to those under 16. This week I hope to meet representatives of that organisation to discuss it further. But it is voluntary and easily can be ignored. Certainly parents in Norwich have challenged the effectiveness of the code. In a survey of 119 arcades conducted in 1984, Westminster city council found that only 55 per cent. were actually members of that trade association.

Recently, the Home Office research and planning unit published a study entitled, "Amusement Machines, Delinquency and Dependency", which is very critical of many earlier reports and surveys. It concluded:

"there does not seem to be any substantial evidence to support the notion that young people are generally at risk of becoming dependent on playing machines".

It must be clear from my remarks that I am not sure that the Home Office has reached the right judgment. The pressure for change is greater than the Home Office judge it to be at the moment. I hope that this debate is part of the process of consultation for which the Home Office is anxious and which my hon. Friend the Minister will speak about when he replies to the debate.

I hope that my hon. Friend will also be willing to discuss the change in the law to which I have referred before, but I stress again the importance of keeping it under review. In a letter to me last summer, my hon. Friend the Minister said that the present powers of local authorities are substantial. He pointed to the procedure of the planning and licensing stage and reminded me of local authority powers. However, recent cases in Norwich and other parts of the country make a strong case for a change in the law.

Like the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie), I am considering possible changes which might be achieved via a suitably drafted Bill. One option would be to strengthen the law so as to incorporate Home Office guidance as contained in the 1969 circular, although I gather that it would be difficult to draft. Other approaches involve an age limit, either at 16 or, as has been suggested earlier today, at 18, for example the proposed amendments to the Criminal Justice Act 1988. There could be an age limit imposed nationally or discretionary powers could be given to local authorities to impose such a limit.

Given that the seriousness of arcade addiction varies between different locations and that different interpretations are put on the evidence available, I favour the second approach. The industry itself accepts the need to ban children from arcades. That is why there is a voluntary ban in inland arcades therefore they have nothing to fear from the tightening of the law being suggested.

I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for listening to my remarks. I hope that the Home Office will recognise that there is a great deal of concern about arcade addiction and the distress experienced by many young people and their families. I hope that he will accept the case for a tightening of the law on gambling and that I shall have the opportunity to discuss it with him further. I assure him that there is real distress among young people and their families as a result of this addiction. I strongly believe that prevention is better than cure.

11.53 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) for once again contributing to the debate on an important subject of considerable concern to the House and to those outside, and for making sure that it is kept at the forefront of our minds. I was glad to hear the brief intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kempton (Mr. Bowden) and to note what was said by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie), who presented his own Bill on the matter earlier today. I also note the presence in the Chamber of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) who has a long-standing concern over these issues.

This debate does two things. First, it gives me a chance to respond to the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North that we need to keep the law in this area under review—and, of course, we do so constantly. Indeed, a little less than six months ago, on 28 July 1988 we made a statement to this House reporting on the research conducted by the Home Office and setting out a set of measures for the House to consider. The second useful purpose of the debate is that it allows me to report to the House on the not inconsiderable progress that has been made in less than six months in this area. I am sure that that will be of interest to hon. Members of all parties.

I should say at the outset that I share the concern about the individual named cases which my hon. Friend has drawn to the attention of the House. I am familiar with some already and have met the mother of one of the cases to which my hon. Friend referred. I remember with pleasure meeting the delegation that he brought from Norwich last summer.

However, that recognition of the seriousness of some cases should not detract from the Government's general approach to the problems associated with the excessive playing of amusement machines by young people. Whatever else the Home Office research did—it was backed up by independent research from the Gaming Board for Great Britain—it did not produce evidence of widespread addiction; it produced evidence of some addiction.

[Mr. John Patten]

I hope that the measures that we are already taking will provide practical assistance both in Norwich and in the rest of the country to help those who are addicted and, more importantly—I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North—to try to prevent those who might fall into addiction from becoming addicted in due course. As my hon. Friend observed, prevention is better than cure in this case.

As the House is well aware of the background to this issue, it would be otiose for me to go over it. That applies especially to the research into various cases, as my hon. Friend has already drawn attention to that. Therefore, I can begin by remarking that there are two areas in which action has been taking place since the statement of 28 July. The first concerns the existing law, which is complex—of that there can be no doubt. However, it is not necessarily ineffective law. One problem is that it is not used effectively or to the full and that is something that we want to try to put right. It is evident to us in the Home Office that not all local authorities are using their present powers effectively. We decided that our first priority must be to draw their existing powers to the attention of local authorities. We did so by issuing a circular in November to emphasise the importance to be attached to that point.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North has specifically asked me to comment on those powers, it may be helpful if I summarise the position briefly. The various provisions are contained in the Gaming Act 1968. The control to be exercised by local authorities hinges on the permits that are required under that Act for premises with amusements-with-prizes slot machines, or AWPs as they are known in the trade.

Broadly, premises with AWP machines fall into two main categories: those where the machines are incidental to the main business, such as cafés or fish and chip shops; and arcades and other such amusement places themselves. In neither case can a condition such as an age limit be put on the use of machines, but in premises other than arcades a local authority's powers—I choose my words carefully —are in other respects draconian. In particular, they can, by resolution, ban such machines from some altogether.

In some cases in England—I cannot speak with such authority for Scotland—when delegations from local district councils have come to see me, it has been startling to discover that they were unaware of the extent of their powers.

Where there is no such resolution in force, the grant or the renewal of a permit is, of course, at local authorities' discretion. Some authorities already impose such bans, and I understand that Norwich city council is one of those. Our circular should bring those options clearly to the attention of all local authorities. It is a matter for local decision, which is important, because local councillors understand the local context of social problems, and, where appropriate, they can provide a wide measure of control over premises where children and young adults might otherwise have easy access to such machines in a completely unsupervised environment, such as in a fish and chip shop in a shopping parade.

A local authority's powers over the issue of permits for an amusement arcade might not be quite so sweeping for other premises, but they are nonetheless substantial. I continue to feel that a number of local authorities, in England at least, do not appreciate the range of powers that are open to them, or, if they appreciate them, they do not use them.

An important point is that, when an amusement arcade gets going, two separate and unrelated processes must be observed. There is the planning process under planning legislation and the permit process under gaming legislation. In law, local authorities must consider each case on its merits as appropriate, because an entire business may be at stake. However, they have discretion as to whether or not to grant a permit, which is unaffected by the fact that planning permission may previously have been granted to set up an amusement arcade in those premises. It does not flow from the fact that planning permission has been given that a new permit will be granted. A permit can be refused, and there is, of course, appeal to the Crown court against the local authority's decision.

Although no criteria for the exercise of a local authority's decision are laid down in the Gaming Act 1968, the implication is that, in considering an application, an authority should take careful account of the social considerations that apply in that particular area, such as the numbers of arcades already in existence—I believe that there are four in my hon. Friend's city of Norwich—and whether those arcades are judged to be over-frequented by children and by young adults. That was the advice given back in 1969 in the circular to which my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Norwich, North referred—although, as he rightly pointed out, it has no statutory force. Giving it statutory force is one of the options to which my hon. Friend is addressing his mind.

Nevertheless, we have no evidence that, where local authorities have provided a proper case on these grounds, the courts have taken a different view. Search as hard as we may, we have not found that to be the case. We feel that these powers still strike the right balance for the regulation of arcades. I believe that there is no evidence of a need to specify the grounds for refusal of a permit in statute, or that the present law is inadequate for its purpose.

Another area where the local authorities can already act under present legislation is in the regulation of amusement arcades, especially in their opening hours under byelaws. I can again report to the House that we are having good discussions with local authorities and trade associations about the drawing up of model byelaws to be made available to local authorities to regulate the opening hours of amusement arcades.

I said that there were two main areas for action. The second is the question of how to warn young people and their parents of the possible hazards of the excessive use of amusement machines and how best to deal with the small number who actually turn out to be at risk. Following the announcement on 28 July 1988, before Christmas we wrote to all interested parties. We wrote to the local authority associations, to those concerned with education and youth services and to a wide range of other organisations inside and outside the industry.

We have made various suggestions in the consultation letter, which is a public document, and I dare say that my hon. Friend has had the chance to look at it. We have said that we believe that there is scope for much better liaison between local organisations such as the police, social services, the voluntary sector and amusement arcade proprietors to try to overcome possible misunderstandings

and differences in the local environment where they occur. I repeat that I believe that, often, such problems are best dealt within the local context.

We have already received a good number of extremely helpful and constructive replies from those whom we are consulting and shortly we hope to begin a round of discussions with them with a view to develop ideas further and to turn them into reality.

We are also considering the possibility that further guidance, including advice for parents, should be prominently displayed near the entrances to all arcades and possibly to other premises that have amusement machines that offer prizes. That idea will need to be discussed further with the British Amusement Catering Trades Association and other interested organisations. I know that the former association is keen to participate in the process and it already has established local liaison arrangements in several areas to try to deal with the problem. I was interested to learn that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North will meet that association later this week to discuss the matter further.

At the start of my speech I said that the measures that we announced on 28 July were those currently considered to be appropriate to deal with the situation. Tonight I have taken the opportunity to report to the House the number of steps that we have taken to try to turn the hopes outlined in the July 1988 statement into reality. Tonight's debate serves a useful purpose over and above putting forward particular courses of action.

Mr. Bowden: I hesitate to accuse my hon. Friend of complacency. He has said that the problem is not widespread, but how does one define widespread? Is it not a fact that, sadly, a significant number of young people are spending large sums of money each week on such machines? A significant number of young people are also missing school as a result of that addiction. It is a serious problem and legislation will be needed sooner or later.

Mr. Patten: I am glad that my hon. Friend did not accuse me of complacency. I have never been accused of being complacent at the Dispatch Box, and I should hate to lose my record. I am glad that my hon. Friend drew back from that dreadful suggestion.

When we began the process of looking at how to respond to the public pressure, north and south of the border, about this issue, we had an open mind as to whether playing such machines was leading to large-scale addiction. For that reason, we gave the Home Office research and planning unit, which has an international reputation for its research excellence, a completely open brief to visit the highways and byways, the amusement arcades, the fish-and-chip shops and other places with such machines, to obtain the facts for us. If that unit had come back and said that there was a major problem, our reaction would have been different. However, it said—its view was reinforced by a further independent examination by the Gaming Board's own professional inspectors—that the number of cases of addiction was limited and did not merit immediate legislation.

I repeat to my hon. Friends the Members for Norwich, North and for Kemptown that we shall keep the need for legislation under review. Tonight I wanted to report to the House the considerable progress that we have already made in the six months since the July statement.

Tonight's debate is valuable because part of the solution to the problem may be found in increasing public awareness of the problem and how to deal with it. Tonight's discussion can only help to bring the matter to public attention again and to stimulate discussion and interest to good effect. For that reason, I was glad to be present to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 11 January 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords]*
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Drug Trafficking (Central and Latin America)

1. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on international efforts to eradicate drug trafficking in central and Latin America.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): There is close co-operation between central and Latin American countries and the rest of the international community to combat drug trafficking. The United Kingdom is contributing to these efforts both bilaterally and through the United Nations.

Mr. Tracey: Is my hon. Friend aware of the extremely good work being done by the Bahamas Government in co-operation with the United States coastguard and the drug enforcement agency to combat drug trafficking from Colombia in particular to Florida? Will the Government consider any form of assistance for the Bahamas defence force in this good work?

Mr. Eggar: I recognise the degree of co-operation between the Bahamas Government and the United States Government—and, indeed, our own authorities, both in the dependent territories and in the United Kingdom. I shall shortly visit the Bahamas, where I shall have discussions on drug matters with the Bahamas Government.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that although good work is being done there is a tendency to be complacent and that, if the success being achieved continues, the scene of drug trafficking could move to Europe, particularly to Spain and Portugal? Is the hon. Gentleman aware of that, and what steps have been taken in co-operation with others to deal with it?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is, unfortunately, a considerable amount of evidence that the drugs cartels have targeted the whole of Europe for an increase in the export of cocaine, especially from Latin America. Also, because of the difference between the wholesale price of cocaine in London and in the United States there is an increasing trend towards exporting refined cocaine directly from the United States to the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe. We face a considerable threat and, together with other European countries and other countries throughout the world, we are doing what we can to combat it.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the unfortunate fact that for large areas of Bolivia at present the cultivation of coca is the only economic way of life? Does he agree that we should be putting a considerable amount of assistance into developing alternative crops, in the form of technical and marketing assistance for the people of those areas?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend. The return to the peasant farmers of Bolivia at some times of the year is considerably greater from the cultivation of cocaine and the coca crop than it would be from any alternative crop. That is why we have a large aid programme—well in excess of £2 million—in what we call the crop substitution area of Bolivia. I pay tribute to the Bolivian Government for their determination to end drug trafficking in their country.

Afghanistan

2. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to pay an official visit to Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Afghanistan.

Mr. Bowis: I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will find an opportunity to do so when Afghanistan is free and independent. In the meantime, will my hon. Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend press the Soviet Union to ensure that it lives up to its promise to be out of Afghanistan by 15 February? Will my hon. Friend urge upon the Soviets that their good faith depends on this? We do not want to hear any more nonsense about partitioning Afghanistan or about insisting that the Communists take part in Afghan government in the future, given that the people there have rejected that?

Mr. Eggar: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Soviet Union must honour the Geneva commitment to withdraw all its forces by 15 February. If Russian troops were to stay, not only would that be a breach of the agreement, but it would prolong a senseless war. The present regime in Kabul is doomed.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend recall that negotiations between the European Community and Comecon were suspended in 1980 as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan? Those negotiations have now resumed. Will they be suspended if the Soviets do not leave Afghanistan as promised?

Mr. Eggar: I have to say to my hon. Friend that we must work on the present assumption that the Soviets will withdraw by 15 February.

Middle East

3. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Mr. Arafat's recent statements, which we welcome, have pointed the way to the PLO's eventual participation in peace negotiations. The world now looks to Israel for a positive response. All of us, meanwhile, should work to see that present opportunity for real progress is not wasted.

Sir Dennis Walters: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Israeli oppression and repression on the west bank continues unabated? Can any steps be taken to assist the Palestinian population? Is he further aware that it is the declared intention of the Israeli Government to sabotage the talks between the United States and the PLO? Can we do anything to prevent this happening and to prevent the wrecking of a very hopeful initiative and of progress toward a peaceful settlement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with my hon. Friend that there are still grounds for very grave concern about many of the things that are happening in the occupied territories, whether in terms of recent deportations and detentions or in connection with many other aspects of Israeli conduct in those occupied territories, which have to be treated in accordance with the Geneva convention. The occupation is illegal and does not contribute at all to the prospects for peace. We shall go on making as plain as possible to the Israeli Government our recognition of the right of Israel to a secure existence behind secure borders and our clear view that that right is jeopardised by continuing conduct of that kind. As I have said on many occasions, it is for Israel to respond to the opportunity for peace that is now open.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the use of heavily armed Israeli troops to shoot down Palestinian children armed only with stones does not help to produce the sort of atmosphere that is necessary for a reasonable settlement? Will he continue to take every opportunity to press the need for sensible policies by the Israeli Government in the occupied territories?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. We are seriously concerned at continuing unrest of all kinds. We regret deaths and injuries of all kinds, particularly of innocent civilians. It is worth noting that more than 330 Palestinians have been killed while the number of Israelis killed is 11. We regret all deaths, but that balance shows how important it is for the people and Government of Israel to recognise that violence and repression offer no solution, and that it is for them to join the rest of us in seeking a peaceful solution.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for the work that he has done in trying to bring true peace to the middle east. I am sure that the whole House will wish the Minister of State well on his visit to Tunis tomorrow to meet both Yasser Arafat and senior members of the PLO. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that Mr. Shamir is not leading Israel down the path of true peace with, for example, his attitude to the President of the European Parliament during a visit this week? However, the indication from Mr. Shamir that the United Nations can somehow be involved is encouraging. The death toll among Palestinians to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred is an unacceptable statistic. There is a large national constituency in Israel yearing for true dialogue, true negotiations and real peace. Mr. Shamir must accept that.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I recognise the force of my hon. Friend's points. He is right to remind the House that the Israeli Government were only quite recently elected and have promised a new initiative in this respect. The Prime Minister of Israel has referred to the possible role of the United Nations, and I can certainly assure the Israeli Government that we shall be ready to look at any initiative that they offer on its merits. We certainly want to see early action on their part and I hope that we can have early discussions with the Israeli Government. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has invited Mr. Shamir, the Prime Minister of Israel, to come to the United Kingdom and I look forward to the opportunity of early contact with Israel's Foreign Minister.

Mr. Robertson: Surely the Foreign Secretary agrees that recent American activity in the Mediterranean is likely to damage the whole peace process in the middle east. We agree that Colonel Gaddafi is, and has been for a long time, both an unstable menace and a friend to terrorists and that the construction of chemical weapons plants, whether in Iraq, Libya or elsewhere, should be of acute concern to the world, but the Foreign Secretary will surely also recognise that by manufacturing tension and brinkmanship the United States is dicing with death in the middle east. Why, therefore, do the British Government still insist on their lonely encouragement of American action, including the veiled threats to bomb the poison gas plant near Tripoli, especially when all our European allies have counselled a sober and safe course of action?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, who normally has a balanced approach to these questions, should have been distracted by the opportunity of denouncing the United States without any justification whatsoever. In the course of my recent contacts with five Governments in the Arabian peninsula, although the matter of the shooting down of the Libyan aircraft was raised—I made it plain that it was done in self-defence—it was not seen as standing in the way of sensible discussion of the main problem of the Arab-Israel peace process, nor should it be allowed to do so. The hon. Gentleman is being distracted by something that is less than worthy of him.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: On reflection, does my right hon. and learned Friend not feel that Britain's three abstentions in the United Nations Security Council in respect of the middle east were unworthy and gave us little credit in the international community? Should not Britain be playing a greater part in the European Community to make sure that Europe takes the lead in trying to get both sides in the middle east together?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know my hon. Friend's particular interest in this subject, but I must tell him that his question could not be more misconceived. In all my discussions in the past 10 days, Britain's role and responsibility has been clearly recognised and welcomed. We abstained on those three resolutions because we took the view, for example, that the refusal of the visa was wrong and that the

language being used to condemn it was also intemperate. Our abstension was entirely respected and we were regarded as having played an effective and valuable part in building the bridge to the talks that will now take place between the United States and the PLO. I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety, but I can assure him that it is totally without foundation.

Iran

4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met a representative of the Iranian Government; and what subjects were discussed.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. and learned Friend met the Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr. Velayati, in New York on 30 September last year. I met him on 9 January this year. We discussed progress in the resumption of full diplomatic representation in London and Tehran. I raised the imprisonment of the Briton, Roger Cooper, in Iran, and the British hostages in the Lebanon.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that, quite apart from the holding of hostages by the terrorist regime in Iran, British diplomatic recognition of that regime can be forthcoming only when it stops violating the human rights of its own people? There have been reports of up to 12,000 people being executed since the end of the Gulf war by what can only be described as the butchers in Tehran. Are we so keen to have trade relations with that country that we are willing to forget about human rights? Does the Minister agree that this is another Government who are doomed, or should be?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is probably aware that we never broke diplomatic relations with Iran. Iran is an important country in the region and it is right that we should have diplomatic relations with her. When I met the Foreign Minister, I thought that my principal duty was to seek the release of the British citizen held in Iran and to seek Iran's help, which we believe it could give, in the release of the hostages in Lebanon. We have made it perfectly clear on a number of occasions that the human rights abuses to hich the hon. Gentleman referred in Iran are unacceptable to us, as are those elsewhere.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend referred to certain meetings of a diplomatic nature. Was reference made at these to the disgust and horror of the British Parliament and people at the continued execution of political prisoners in Iran? That subject must be dealt with before any high level exchange of the kind which may have been suggested at those meetings takes place.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the Iranian Government and Dr. Velayati are in no doubt about the feelings in this House and elsewhere about those matters. I regarded it as my principal duty in the meeting the day before yesterday to seek Dr. Velayati's urgent help in the case of Mr. Cooper and over the hostages in the Lebanon because we believe that the House and the British people will not allow us to relax in our relations with Iran while they believe that more can be done from the Iranian side.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the Minister aware that many hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that it was also his duty to raise the matter of the executions? The matter is important. Even if 12,000 is an exaggeration, the figure is still appallingly large. I hope that the Government will not react by increasing export credits as they did when Iraq used chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: I repeat what I said to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I regarded my duty to this House as being to put help for the hostages and our own citizens at the top of my agenda. Of course we make repeated representations on the wider human rights context as well.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Does my hon. Friend accept that, concerning the ever-continuing detention of Roger Cooper, who has been detained now for three years in the Evin prison in Iran, it is exclusively within the power of the Iranian Government to provide his release? Does my hon. Friend further agree and accept that in addition to other matters that have validly been raised, full resumption of diplomatic relations must depend on the release of Roger Cooper in the first place and on the Government's satisfaction that the Islamic Government of Iran are doing all that they can to deliver the freedom of British hostages held in the Lebanon?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend puts it most accurately. We should also recognise that a welcome step was made with the freeing of Mr. Nicola. We welcome that unreservedly and hope that it is a sign that the kind of improvement in relations with Iran that my hon. Friend wants, and which we all want, will be possible if Iran responds to the concerns of this House.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister was absolutely right to give priority to making representations about British citizens who are being held completely unjustly as hostages. However, does he not recognise that the Government have a responsibility to express the feeling of revulsion and horror in this House and in many parts of the country at the way in which the regime is carrying out executions of political prisoners on an almost daily basis? If it were a Communist regime, the Tories would be in uproar and rightly so. Why is there not the same reaction to the bloodstained regime in Iran?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman started well, but then characteristically fell off the rails. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) raised the same matters with perhaps more dignity. However, I take the point.

Mr. Robert Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is public recognition that it was correct to restore our diplomatic mission in Tehran, but since then there has been increasing impatience over the delay in the release of Roger Cooper and the role that the Iranian authorities can play in helping to secure the release of the hostages in Beirut? Will he take on board the growing impatience of the British people about those specific points?

Mr. Waldegrave: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's impatience and I sympathise even more with the impatience of Mr. Cooper's family. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the welcome release of Mr.

Nicola shows that the careful and limited steps that we have been taking have paid off. We hope that there will be further steps in the same direction before too long.

Mr. Anderson: We could have made representations to the Iranian Government on the appalling mass executions as, of course we did properly about Mr. Cooper and the hostages, because we maintained a residual diplomatic link with Iran. On the other country in the region which the Minister mentioned as that important country of Syria, we cannot make direct representations about the British hostages in the middle east or generally about the middle east peace process. Have the Government now come to the point where they are reconsidering diplomatic relations with Syria?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. There is no change in the situation in relation to Syria. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we find it impossible to have relations with a regime, senior officials of which took steps which might have led to a catastrophe in the centre of London as bad or worse than that which we recently saw in Lockerbie.

Fiji

5. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to pay an official visit to Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Fiji at present.

Dr. Marek: Can the Minister confirm that the constitution of Fiji published last autumn by the military-installed Government is not democratic and does not allow the people of Fiji to participate in periodic and genuine elections by universal and equal suffrage? Will he do what he can to persuade the rulers of Fiji to accept a constitution under which they could, without any trouble, become signatories to the United Nations declaration on human rights? Can he also tell the House what success he has had in that respect by giving aid in the drafting of the constitution to the present Fijian Government?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we have consistently urged the Fijian Government to return to parliamentary democracy. They are currently looking for a constitution that will be acceptable to all communities within Fiji. The hon. Gentleman, from his experience of Fiji, will be aware that that is not an easy task. We have undertaken to recruit an expert to draft the new constitution, but that expert will be working for the Fijian Government and not for the British Government.

Mr. Boswell: Will my hon. Friend clarify the position of Fijian nationals resident in the United Kingdom and of other Anglo-Fijian ties in the light of Fiji's inevitable but regrettable self-inflicted withdrawal from the Commonwealth—or has that made no difference at all?

Mr. Eggar: It is difficult to make a blanket comment without knowing the position of the individuals to whom my hon. Friend refers. If he will contact me about them, I shall of course comment.

Mr. Corbyn: Can the Minister throw any light on information that he may have received concerning the circumstances of the overthrown Bavandra Government in 1987? Many people are suspicious that a Government committed to a non-nuclear and non-aligned foreign policy should be destabilised and overthrown. Does the Minister agree that an investigation is necessary into the circumstances surrounding that destabilisation, bearing in mind other destabilisations that have been effected in the Pacific area wherever countries have followed a non-nuclear, non-aligned foreign policy?

Mr. Tony Banks: Not to mention Harold Wilson.

Mr. Eggar: Obviously the hon. Gentleman has been refuelling his supply of conspiracy theories over the Christmas period. I am surprised at the nature of his question. Is he suggesting that the British Government should enter an independent country and conduct an inquiry?

CSCE Review Conference

6. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the concluding document of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe review conference in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: We hope that the Vienna meeting will conclude shortly with the adoption of a substantial and balanced document. That should represent a major step forward on previous CSCE commitments—for example, on religious freedom, freedom to emigrate, and freer flow of information.

Mr. Atkinson: I commend my hon. Friend and his western colleagues on their refusal to conclude the Helsinki review conference until substantial progress on implementation can be agreed. Will he accept that, far from a few dozen religious and political prisoners being left in the gulag—as was suggested following Chancellor Kohl's visit last October, when he announced that all prisoners would be released—there remain several hundred prisoners, the names of whom I have given to my hon. Friend? Will my hon. Friend confirm that there will be no human rights conference in Moscow until further real, substantial and irreversible progress is made on human rights in the Soviet Union?

Mr. Waldegrave: As we have said, the United Kingdom's attendance at the Moscow conference depends on the Soviet Union's making further specific human rights improvements between now and 1991. I shall arrange for a copy of the Foreign Office statement on the matter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Certainly some political and religious prisoners remain in the Soviet Union, but we think—and this is a happy state of affairs—that my hon. Friend's list is somewhat out of date, and that the number is now somewhat less. However, it is still very much higher than a few dozen.

Mr. Michael Marshall: My hon. Friend will be aware of the parliamentary exchanges through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which are part of the CSCE process. Will he take this opportunity, in a week when the leader of the German IPU delegation is visiting the House, to reaffirm his understanding of the position whereby both British and German parliamentarians have refused to meet in Romania in May to discuss CSCE progress? Does he understand that position and support it?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is no news to the House that Her Majesty's Government regard the human rights position in Romania as very unsatisfactory and getting worse. There are problems now between Romania and its allies, who, I think, are almost as fed up with it as we are.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Minister looking forward to the talks about conventional weapon reductions in Europe which should flow from any agreement in Vienna? Will we be making a positive, progressive proposal there, rather than taking the negative attitude that we have taken to the proposals of President Gorbachev?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman rightly emphasises the next great step forward available to us, which should result—as he says—from agreement in Vienna. The principle of reducing the disequilibrium in conventional forces to which President Gorbachev has committed himself is very welcome, and there will certainly be a practical response from the western side.

Mr. Corbett: Given the importance that the Foreign Secretary attaches to the rights of individuals who have emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel to be reunited with their families there, does the same principle apply to people from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who have waited for up to a decade for their families to join them in this country?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is quite a creative development of a question about the Vienna CSCE. The hon. Gentleman knows what the regulations are, and he knows that there are queues.

Mr. Lawrence: I hope that I shall not embarrass my hon. Friend, but what on earth happened to the Government's commitment of only 11 days ago not to support a human rights conference in Moscow until the Soviets had improved their performance on human rights more than they have so far managed to?

Mr. Waldegrave: It would be impossible for my hon. and learned Friend to embarrass me on this or any other matter, and I am sure that that is not his intention.

The position is clear. We believe that it is right that the progress that has been made should be recognised by an acceptance in principle of the possibility of a human rights conference in Moscow, but we reserve the right not to go if the firm pledges made by President Gorbachev and his colleagues are not met, and we shall retain that right up to the day before the conference.

UK-India Relations

7. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and India.

Mr. Eggar: Relations between the United Kingdom and India are close. We continue, with the Indian Government, to look for ways to improve the relationship still further.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that when I visited India during the Christmas recess I was pleased to find that relations between Britain and India were very much better than they have been in recent years? Will he please pay a tribute to the British high commissioner in Delhi and his staff for the patient work that they are doing, and will he continue to be aware that a number of very fragile issues need watching if the position is to continue and indeed improve further?

Mr. Eggar: I am very pleased indeed to hear what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said, and I shall of course ensure that his comments are passed on to our high commissioner in Delhi. I should also like to pay tribute to the work of the present Indian high commissioner here in London—the deputy high commissioner who took responsibility when Dr. Alexander returned home after a distinguished period as Indian high commissioner in London.

Mr. Jessel: Are not the relations between Britain and India of great importance as the Commonwealth link, in that the traditional ties of history, language and law can act as a bridge between Europe and Asia? Does my hon. Friend accept that a modern India wants close relations with Britain as a whole and with the Conservative Government and that any idea of a special link with the Labour party is 40 years out of date?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend about the close ties between the two countries. I would not want to create any kind of a divide across the Chamber on the importance of the relationship between India and the United Kingdom, under whatever Government.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister understand that the introduction of DNA testing as a formal part of entry clearance procedures in India or elsewhere on the Indian sub-continent, whereby the applicant would be charged several hundred pounds, is wholly unacceptable? Will he look at the terms of early-day motion 249 where he will see the expressions of concern about such a procedure, and will he undertake urgent discussions with Home Office colleagues to ensure that their secret plan is scrapped and that there is no introduction of charges to applicants or sponsors for DNA testing?

Mr. Eggar: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that DNA testing applies mainly to people from Bangladesh and Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, to people who wish to come to this country from India, because of the difference in the period of time that has elapsed since the main amount of immigration from India compared with the other two countries in the sub-continent. I shall of course have discussions with my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Office about DNA testing. The hon. Gentleman well knows that the matter is under consideration.

Mr. Dicks: Have the British Government made any representations to this evil Indian Government about their persecution of the Sikhs in the Punjab? If not, why not?

Mr. Eggar: For my hon. Friend to put the question in that way is extremely unhelpful and it is inappropriate in the House. My hon. Friend is well aware of the Government's position on this matter. It was fully explained to him in an Adjournment debate before Christmas.

Mr. Wall: Will the Minister have early discussions with the Indian Government about a time scale for the withdrawal of the Indian peace-keeping force from Sri Lanka? In view of the Indian Government's close interest

in the island of Sri Lanka, will the Minister also ask the Indian Government when they feel that conditions in Sri Lanka will return to normal so that business people and tourists can go there and peacefully carry out their activities, with this Government no longer carrying the odium of threatening to send refugees back to that country —including sending Viraj Mendis, the refugee, back to his death?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman should remember that Indian troops are in Sri Lanka at the request of the Sri Lankan Government. The newly elected President of Sri Lanka has recently asked for a reduction in the number of troops from India, and I understand that that is happening.

NATO Secretary-General

8. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plan to meet the secretary-general of NATO to discuss North Atlantic foreign policy co-operation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expect to meet the secretary-general of NATO at the ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council scheduled to take place on 8 to 9 June in London.

Mr. Bowden: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the secretary-general of NATO, will he explain that, while we welcome the progress that the Soviet Union is making towards cutting the numbers of nuclear weapons, we are nevertheless witnessing an increase in their quality? While the numbers may go down, the quality goes up. Does that not make it even more important that NATO should have its own modernisation programme?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Soviet Union's modernisation programme is continuing at full speed with, for example, more accurate SS21s replacing FROGS, without any diminution in numbers, despite the massive 14:1 Soviet superiority in SNF missile launchers, the continuing build-up of Backfire and Fencer aircraft, nuclear-capable artillery being modernised and SSM21 sea-launched cruise missiles recently deployed. Hon. Members must understand that whereas NATO is considering modernisation options, the Soviet Union is going full speed ahead with a whole panoply of programmes.

Dr. Owen: Will the Secretary of State ensure that when the NATO Foreign Ministers meet they will discuss a statement by Secretary Shultz that has not received much publicity? Mr. Shultz said that there is a grotesque spectre of the proliferation of biological weapons. He alleged that nations were stockpiling and producing different and more virulent strains of bacterial weapons, in direct contravention of the 1972 biological weapons treaty. That is a very serious allegation. It is the first time that it has been made in such strong and trenchant terms. Will the Secretary of State ask NATO Foreign Ministers to name the countries that are breaching the treaty and take co-ordinated action to bring them to book?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman is right to be concerned about the matter. As he knows, we have been pressing for a long time for a world-wide, effective comprehensive ban on chemical weapons, and the case against biological weapons is just as strong.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reject the views of the West German Admiral Schmähling who is talking about the reunification of Germany and the withdrawal of all American forces?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The views expressed by that gentleman have not been described as the views of the West German Government, who understand, as was made clear in their commitment to the NATO summit communiqué last spring, the importance of the continuing presence of United States troops in Europe.

Mr. Robertson: Will the Foreign Secretary comment on reports that the Americans have decided not to develop an air-launched stand-off missile and that they are increasingly reluctant to consider any replacement for the Lance missile system? Will he comment on what that will do for the present NATO posture, especially the Government's enthusiasm for modernisation? Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the meeting on 9 and 10 June will be a Foreign Ministers meeting, or will it be upgraded to a meeting of Heads of Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The matters that the hon. Gentleman mentioned at the start of his question are only some of the aspects affecting the modernisation of NATO forces under consideration by the United States and the Alliance. No decision has yet been taken about the possibility of a summit this year. At present, the June meeting is foreseen as being at Foreign Minister level.

Mr. William Powell: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take time with the secretary-general to consider the awesome deployment of advance battle divisions by the Soviet army in East Germany? Will he make it plain that for the British Government improving relations with the Soviet Union will depend upon progress being made in the talks on the elimination of chemical weapons and the reduction of conventional weapons in Europe by the Soviets?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right. We attach the highest importance to continued progress in the discussions, not only on the chemical weapons worldwide ban to which I have already referred, but in the shortly to be commenced discussions on conventional weapons in Europe, where Soviet predominance is still massive.

Vietnamese Refugees (Hong Kong)

9. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with the Governor of Hong Kong on the plight of the Vietnamese refugees.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are in close and frequent contact with the Government of Hong Kong on all aspects of the problem of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. My noble Friend the Minister of State is at present paying a visit to Hong Kong.

Mr. Clarke: Is the figure of 1,000 refugees, recently announced by the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), based on two or three years? What is the criterion for selection and why, given the

ungenerous nature of this announcement, is the Foreign Secretary insisting that it must be conditional on the reaction of other countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The length of time over which the 1,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong may be able to come to this country has not yet been specified. It will be over two or three years and, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, that statement is made with the proviso that others are prepared to contribute commensurately. That is an important and valuable qualification because we greatly value the willingness of other countries to match Britain's commitment to accept an additional intake of refugees. It is important to ensure that our offer of a further intake secures the same sort of response from the other countries whose generosity we appreciate.

Sir Peter Blaker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend pay tribute to the responsible way in which the Government and people of Hong Kong have handled the burdensome matter of the Vietnamese boat people who have reached Hong Kong? Does he also accept that the Government's announcement about accepting into this country 1,000 more refugees, and the proviso that was added to it, will be welcomed in the House? Have any other countries such as Australia expressed their willingness to accept more refugees from Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend is entirely right to emphasise the debt that we owe to the Government and people of Hong Kong for their willingness to provide accommodation for large numbers of people, not least the 15,000 who arrived there during 1988. We have not yet had any fresh commitments as a result of the statement to the House before Christmas, but of course it is early days.

Mr. Mullin: Would not the best way to reduce the flow of refugees be to end the trade and aid embargo against Vietnam and to stop supporting the Khmer Rouge?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is not our view. We have made it plain that we are prepared to give financial assistance to the boat people who return to Vietnam, but the economic condition in Vietnam depends on substantial changes in the economic policy of that country. There are some signs that the Vietnamese are beginning to recognise the need for those changes.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the problem of the Vietnamese boat people has been burdensome for the Government and the people of Hong Kong? In discussions with other countries that might accept a larger number of refugees, will he undertake to draw attention to the British Government's offer to accept a bigger intake into this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, certainly. That is one of the main consequences of our offer to accept a further 1,000 refugees into this country. We also owe a great debt of gratitude to the Hong Kong Government and people and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees whose help and advice we have greatly valued. In September we announced a contribution of £1 million towards his work and I can now confirm that we shall be contributing another £1 million towards the UNHCR in 1989.

Mr. Foulkes: For once it is a great pleasure for me to welcome the direction in which Government policy is moving. Will the Secretary of State supply a little more detail about how he will translate the principle into practice? Will he provide some indication of the timetable of discussions with other countries, as the Canadians have already made an unconditional announcement that they will take more refugees? Will he make it clear that he does not need the total agreement of all possible countries before putting together a package to deal with the problem?

Finally, in the longer term, is it the Government's intention and hope to ensure that the whole problem of refugees in Hong Kong is dealt with by the time we hand over the colony to the People's Republic of China in 1997 so that people are no longer condemned to exist in camps, some of which are very much like an oriental Alcatraz.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Despite the rather sharp phrase with which the hon. Gentleman closed his question, I am glad to welcome his support for Government policy. Of course it is our firm intention to ensure that the problem of Vietnamese refugees and boat people should be resolved well before 1997. It has been important to establish the various components now in place, including the screening process to distinguish genuine refugees from the rest. It is important for us to get ahead as fast as we can in finding homes for those refugees. We shall have to judge the scale and nature of the response of other Governments as we receive responses to the approaches we are making and have been making for some time. We welcome the offer which was made by Canada before my latest announcements.

President Gorbachev

10. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects that President Gorbachev will next visit the United Kingdom.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Mr. Gorbachev's planned visit to the United Kingdom last month had to be postponed due to the tragic earthquake in Armenia. We hope that it will be possible to agree new dates for the visit in the near future.

Mr. Hughes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that when that date is announced—and we look forward to the visit with great anticipation—it would be good for President Gorbachev to have an understanding of the work done by many thousands of people in this country to seek the release of Russian refuseniks? In particular, will he bring to the attention of President Gorbachev the work done by people such as the group from Pinner synagogue in seeking to bring forward the release of Ilya Resnikov and his family who are being held unreasonably in the Soviet Union?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important on this occasion—as on every other occasion when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have met Mr. Gorbachev or my opposite number—to draw attention to the importance of human rights matters. The Russians have responded positively on previous occasions and we shall hope for the same response this time. The case of Ilya Resnikov will be among the refusenik cases that will be raised during Mr. Gorbachev's visit.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that one reason why poll after poll in the west shows President Gorbachev to be one of the most admired leaders in the world is that he has shown such vision in trying to end the arms race? Does the Foreign Secretary share my pessimism that there does not seem to be any sign that any western statesman has similar vision?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not want to diminish the extent to which we welcome the decisions and statements of Mr. Gorbachev on those matters in recent times, but it is crucial to emphasise that they are responses to long-standing western positions, sustained by the united determination of the western Alliance. We have had on the table for years plans for the massive reduction of conventional weapons in Europe. We have been pressing for years for a worldwide ban on chemical weapons. It is against that background that we should welcome the announcements made by Mr. Gorbachev.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend note the latest information that the Soviet economy is worsening rather than improving? Will he consider, when Mr. Gorbachev visits this country, trying to come forward with an initiative to provide specific assistance to the Soviet Union, such as help with the framing of their joint ventures for Western companies in that country, given the tremendous expertise we have in such matters?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the continuing poor condition of the Soviet economy, in which a great deal remains to be done. That is now being seen as an additional reason for reducing the huge burden of defence expenditure, which still runs at about 15 per cent. of Soviet GNP. We also recognise that there is a useful part to be played along the lines suggested by my hon. Friend. We have been suggesting a number of joint venture opportunities, such as management consultancy and exchanges of students, and we shall continue to do so.

Tibet

11. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of China on the subject of Tibet.

Mr. Eggar: The subject of Tibet was raised by my right hon. and learned Friend with the then Chinese Foreign Minister, when he visited the United Kingdom in March 1988.

Mr. Maxton: Although we all welcome the continuing and improving relationship between this country and China, will the Minister take the earliest opportunity to make the strongest representations to the Chinese Government about the recent killing of peaceful protesters by the Chinese army in Tibet and the continuing violations of civil liberties in Tibet?

Mr. Eggar: I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that we have already made clear our concern about human rights abuses in Tibet. On appropriate occasions, we shall, of course, continue to do so.

Mr. Adley: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that those of us who are well disposed towards the Government of the People's Republic are, nevertheless, concerned and uneasy about some of the reports emanating from Tibet? Will he also bear in mind that there is quite a well-maintained campaigning organisation on behalf of Tibet, which is itself hardly well disposed towards the People's Republic?

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of what my hon. Friend has said and, of course, the House is saddened to hear that there has been further violence and loss of life recently in Tibet.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Foreign Office now regret not agreeing to meet the Dalai Lama?

Mr. Eggar: The Dalai Lama is, of course, welcome to visit this country, but he is regarded by some as the leader of a Tibetan Government in exile, which is recognised neither by Her Majesty's Government nor by any other Government. A meeting with Ministers would, therefore, be open to misconstruction.

Nicaragua

13. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Nicaragua.

Mr. Banks: Is it not a fact that the Minister has a great predeliction for gallivanting around the world, saying nasty and offensive things about Nicaragua? I understand that he will be in that area during 1989, but why does he steadfastly refuse to visit Nicaragua? Is it because he is worried about upsetting his masters in the United States or because he does not want to find that the facts conflict with his prejudices?

Mr. Eggar: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not use General Noriega's aeroplane to get around central America. The hon. Gentleman is, however, quite right—I shall represent the Government at the conference in San Pedro Sula in February. I do not by any means rule out the possibility of a visit to Nicaragua at some stage in the future but unfortunately, other commitments will not make a visit possible in February.

Mr. Marlow: In view of my hon. Friend's responsibility towards this House, will he consult—I am not sure whether it is a psychologist or a psychiatrist—to ask why the Opposition have such an obsession with Nicaragua, a country for which we have no responsibility and in which we have even less interest?

Mr. Eggar: I would very much like to hear the result of a similar inquiry addressed by my hon. Friend to a psychiatrist. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I also will read *Hansard* carefully!

Miss Lestor: If the Minister is seriously thinking of going to Nicaragua, may I urge him to go as soon as possible, bearing in mind the fact that hon. Members and Ministers visit a large number of countries in which we have no direct responsibility? If the Minister went and saw the results of the hurricane, the economic embargo, horrific inflation and the Contra fighting, and saw the Government's efforts to make a success of the economy, he

might come back and persuade the Minister for Overseas Development to give more humanitarian aid, in particular, to the people of Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: I am sure that the hon. Lady will welcome the fact that the Government made more than £400,000 available for relief assistance following the recent hurricane. I know that she is also aware that Nicaragua is the largest recipient of European Community aid to central America, so the Government's contribution to assistance for Nicaragua is already considerable.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is it not important to ensure that massive Soviet and Cuban military aid to Nicaragua is reduced? Does my hon. Friend accept that that aid is quite disproportionate to the country's needs?

Mr. Eggar: I agree that a considerable amount of Soviet Union and Cuban assistance goes to Nicaragua. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that recent actions by the Sandanista Government continue to be contrary both to the letter and to the spirit of their Esquipulas obligations.

Chemical Weapons

14. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the last six months towards negotiating a treaty on chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive global ban on chemical weapons continue at the conference on disarmament in Geneva. Progress has been made, but complex issues remain to be resolved, particularly concerning verification. The Paris conference, at which I represented Her Majesty's Government, should give welcome impetus to this progress.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the Minister agrees that that impetus is much needed in view of Iraq's use of chemical weapons and the frightening possibility of Libya acquiring a chemical weapons capability. Neither Iraq nor Libya could go ahead with chemical weapons without expertise and materials from elsewhere and there have been rumours of such sources in West Germany. Have the Minister or the Foreign Secretary had discussions with their European Community counterparts on this issue? Is the Minister in any position to dispel rumours of West German involvement?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The use of such weapons in the Gulf war was the immediate cause of the conference in Paris. I believe that the West German Government are taking seriously the reports to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and that they are taking action on them.

Mr. Cash: In negotiations on chemical weaponry, is similar attention being given to the dangers of biotechnology and the sort of genetic defects that could result if viruses of the kind that can be developed were used on an international scale?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is already in place a convention that bans biological warfare, but we have fears, to which the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) referred earlier, that these bans are not being respected. It would be all too possible to imagine a catastrophe of the kind that my hon. Friend mentions.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of questions.

Mr. Speaker: I shall listen with great interest after the statement.

Water Privatisation (Merger Policy)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the merger policy in relation to water privatisation.

On Second Reading of the Water Bill, I announced that, in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I would be bringing forward proposals to ensure that there are arrangements to preserve comparative competition in the water industry following privatisation. I am now able to give the House full details, part of which it was necessary for me to announce at the opening of the stock market at 9 o'clock this morning because it affects stock market dealings.

The proposals will ensure merger control provisions which will allow competition through takeover for the management of water companies, while guarding against undue concentration and reduction in the number of independently owned companies. In order to protect the basis of comparative competition and assist effective regulation of the water industry, there will be special provisions applying to any water company takeovers which would have the effect of bringing any company holding an appointment under the Water Bill, whose asset value exceeds £30 million, under common control with any other such water company. Common control for the purposes of these provisions would be as defined in section 65 of the Fair Trading Act 1973. The provisions will apply to statutory water companies as well as the new water services plcs.

The proposed amendments to the Water Bill will require the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to take into account, in considering any bids for water companies, the undesirability of mergers which would reduce the comparative information that the regulator will need if he is to make yardstick competition effective. The Director General of Water Services will advise the Director General of Fair Trading when water bids are under consideration.

The Bill would enable the MMC to make an adverse report on a merger and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take action to prevent or reverse it solely on the ground that a successful bid would reduce the number of water companies in independent ownership, although the MMC would not be required to reach such a recommendation if it considered that there were other public interest reasons which, in a particular case, outweighed the loss of comparative competition.

The Government intend to introduce amendments that will allow takeovers of statutory water companies initiated from today to be considered against the amended criteria following the coming into force of the new legislation. The amendments will provide that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry can refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, within six months after the Bill comes into force, any water merger covered by the new provisions which is initiated after 9 am today.

In addition to the proposals I announced this morning, I am now in a position to tell the House our proposals on special shares.

The need for comparative competition implies that, in order to stimulate efficient and effective management, the market must have the opportunity to bid for these companies, especially where performance is inadequate, subject to the restrictions I have announced to prevent undue concentration. But we have decided, in the case of the water authorities, given the difficulties of transition from nationalised industry to private sector company, to protect their successor companies for a limited period by providing for a time-limited special share.

Any takeover within a five-year period will require both the approval of shareholders to a change in the relevant articles of association of the company and the written consent of the special shareholder who will be the relevant territorial Secretary of State. Thereafter, the decision would be solely for shareholders, subject to the merger control provisions I have announced.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Why has the Secretary of State waited so long to take this action to prevent the concentration of private monopoly control of the nation's water resources in fewer hands, when it was obvious from the outset that that was exactly where his proposals would lead?

Why are the Government now running away from market forces? At least 15 statutory water companies are now either in French control or the subject of very large French shareholdings. Is it not true that, if the Secretary of State had acted earlier, the Newcastle and Gateshead water company and the Sunderland and South Shields water company purchasers would at least have been referable to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? He has waited until that is too late to make his announcement.

Have not Government disarray and the right hon. Gentleman's vacillation resulted in three French water conglomerates accumulating a huge stake and influence in statutory water companies, thus again concentrating private monopoly power? Does not even this pathetically belated action leave the majority of those statutory water companies which he says he wants to protect—those with assets of less than £30 million—at the mercy of further predatory takeovers and mergers? Where does that leave the right hon. Gentleman's promise to the House on Second Reading on 7 December when he said:

> "It is vital that people should feel that they have a local water company, with those running it living and working locally."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 338.]

What does that mean now to people whose local water companies are in the hands of the French?

Why does the Secretary of State waste words and our time on meaningless phrases on the pretence of comparative competition? There is no competition and there will be none as a result of his policies. What is it that requires protection for five years by taking a special share, other than the need to cosset private enterprise monopoly? That is the objective and that is the result of taking a special share in private water monopolies: cosseting the private sector and protecting private monopoly is what the statement is all about.

Have the proposals been agreed and accepted by the European Community? What discussions has the right hon, Gentleman had with the Commission about them? Will he explain to the House what he means by "other public interest reasons" preventing the need for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate takeovers?

This pathetic statement offers no guarantees of independence to statutory water companies. It is a belated

piece of Tory party political window dressing that offers no protection, choice or competition to water consumers either.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is making rather a meal of this. He asked why it had taken so long to bring these proposals forward. It may have escaped his notice that they involve legislation. I believe it only right that we should have waited until the Bill was before the House—*[Interruption.]* The moment the Bill was debated on Second Reading I warned the House and the country that proposals of this sort were on the way, and the hon. Gentleman quoted from a part of my speech near to the point at which I made that statement.

As I am proposing legislation to amend the Bill, it seemed right that on the first day back after the recess—[HON. MEMBERS: "First day?"]—or second day back, I should put the policy straight away to the House. *[Interruption.]* The House met yesterday for the first time after the recess. This is the second day back.

The hon. Member for Copeland alleges that there has been a massive concentration in the meanwhile. That is not the case. There are 20 water authorities and water companies with assets worth more than £30 million and, as at the moment when I came into the Chamber, there were still 20 in independent ownership. I am aware that there may be a takeover of Newcastle and Gateshead and Sunderland and South Shields, which would of course reduce the number of comparators, but that has not yet been confirmed.

That was referred to the Director General of Fair Trading, as the hon. Gentleman presumably knows, and my noble Friend announced this morning that that bid would not be considered by the MMC for reasons which I am sure he would be prepared to explain to the hon. Member for Copeland, being reasons which reinforce the need for the statement that I have made today. So no concentration of power of the sort which this statement seeks to restrict has taken place. This will ensure that those who manage water companies and indeed those—the vast majority of them—who own water companies will indeed be living and working locally. That is exactly what this statement will achieve.

The hon. Member for Copeland did not seem to know what comparative competition meant.

Dr. Cunningham: It is fatuous.

Mr. Ridley: Let me tell the hon. Gentleman what it means. I am always having to explain things to him, and I am delighted to do so again.

Dr. Cunningham: It is meaningless.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman will stop making sedentary interventions—*[Interruption.]*—and if his hon. Friends seated below the Gangway will stop interrupting, I will explain. Shareholders, investors, auditors, the Director General of Water Services, who is awarding cost limits, and customers of all sorts will have information before them as to the relative cost at which water is sold in each area where an independent operator is preserved. They will be able to compare those statistics and see if one operator is not doing as well as others.

That is what comparative competition means. I am delighted to have this opportunity to explain to the hon. Member for Copeland, who has a lot to learn, what it means, and I am prepared to spend as long as he likes teaching him.

The hon. Gentleman did not seem to believe that there should be any special shares for the water industry. I believe it to be correct that nationalised industries which are coming out of the public sector need time to get themselves into an efficient, well-organised state so that they can face the rigours of the market and the threat of takeover, and the five-year fledgling company—as it is called—special share will be to the assistance of the industry as a whole.

These proposals will, of course, have to be discussed with the EEC, but we could not do that in advance, until we had made the proposals, and I have high hopes that they will be acceptable to the Community.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked what "other public interest reasons" means. If we rely on the MMC to interpret this policy, there may well be the odd example of the commission believing that a merger should be allowed, but the final decision will rest, as always, with my noble Friend the Secretary of State.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his announcement about the golden share will be substantially welcomed in the Water Authorities Association? I am grateful for his responding so quickly to the points raised on Second Reading.

With regard to the other element in my right hon. Friend's statement, will he take note that, although this morning's decision by our right hon. and noble Friend was not to intervene in the Newcastle and Gateshead affair, which my right hon. Friend's scheme was perhaps designed to prevent had it occurred 48 hours later what is now to prevent a water authority from seeking to take a share in Newcastle and Gateshead, thus bringing the matter further into play? Does that mean that such a bid or attempted bid would result in a referral which my right hon. Friend cannot make now?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who sees the merits of the so-called golden share, which the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) did not seem to believe was the right way forward. The latest information I have is that the Newcastle and Gateshead and Sunderland and South Shields water companies have not had an agreed deal. I cannot predict what will happen in that particular case.

If a water authority seeks to take over a statutory water company, three conditions will apply from now on. The first will be the mergers policy which I have just announced. The second will be the outcome of any judicial proceedings which have not yet been settled as to the vires of the takeover by water authorities. I gather that there is likely to be an appeal against a court judgment; until the law is clear on that point, it will be relevant. Thirdly, it would not be my intention to increase the external financing limit of any water authority for this purpose. Within these constraints, the water authorities will be their own masters when deciding what they wish to do.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): When he mentioned a territorial Secretary of State, did the right hon. Gentleman mean that the Secretary of State for Wales would have the power to prevent a takeover of a Welsh water plc? Is it correct that he will have that power for only five years? If so, why not for longer?

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

How many water companies does the Secretary of State think will be necessary to maintain his so-called comparative competition? Would it not be better to write into his merger policy a share limitation scheme which included the consumers who were resident in the area of the water plc?

Mr. Ridley: On the first point, it is correct that during the five-year period of the special share my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will have the power to block or accept a takeover. He will be making a further announcement about arrangements in Wales later this afternoon.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point, I believe that the takeover of an inefficient water authority or company could be very much to the benefit of the consumers if that authority or company is not performing properly. I would not want to discourage that in any way once the companies had found their feet in the private sector. That is why the special share comes to an end.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My right hon. Friend honestly said that these proposals had not been discussed or approved by the EEC Commission, but has he at least discussed with it the implications for its new proposals on monopolies and mergers? In particular, can he say whether any specific direction that he proposes to give under these powers could be overturned by the commissioner at the European Commission in Brussels? Does he agree that any proposals that he puts forward to preserve what he rightly regards as comparative competition could be wholly undermined and overturned by Brussels? Therefore, what is the point of this so-called protection, which I accept he is bringing forward for the best possible reasons?

Mr. Ridley: On the first point, this was a market-sensitive announcement which clearly had to be made public before consultation could take place with anyone. I am confident that the Commission will accept our proposals. That is a matter to be determined in future. Clauses will be coming forward for the Bill and the matter can be debated in Committee and in due course on Report in the House. Once these proposals have been accepted by the EEC and by the House, I do not see any way in which they can be overturned later by the Community.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that a combination of this morning's statement by Lord Young and the Secretary of State's statement this afternoon has reduced the provision of water services in the north-east to a complete shambles in which there will be a kind of squires' war between Sir Michael Straker of the water authority and Lord Elliott of Morpeth, chairman of the Newcastle and Gateshead water company? They will be fighting a kind of feudal war at the expense of the water consumers in the north-east.

What advice can the Secretary of State give water consumers in the north-east who are faced with this uncertainty about the provision and ownership of their water services? What are prospective purchasers of Northumbrian Water to make of a situation in which most of the direct water services for which they will be responsible will not only not be in their hands but impossible for them to acquire?

Mr. Ridley: It is not clear whether the two water companies that the hon. Gentleman mentioned have been taken over by the French company. That had not been decided at the moment when I came into the Chamber, and I cannot predict what will happen. The Newcastle and Gateshead water company and Northumbrian Water have existed in this situation ever since water authorities were set up. I hope that I tread on no one's toes when I say that they have always shown a healthy rivalry, and that perhaps some comparative competition benefits have come out of that. Nothing is changed by this situation. The only diminution in the number of owners would be if these two companies passed into the hands of one French company.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, whereas it is mandatory to refer offers for statutory water companies with gross assets of £30 million or more on an historic cost basis to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, those statutory water companies, numbering about half, whose assets are valued at less than that can be sold and a reference would not be mandatory? Will he also confirm that the arrangements he has announced are in no way affected by the anti-French sentiment emanating from the Opposition but arise from a desire for competition on a level playing field?

Mr. Ridley: I am not the right person to interpret monopolies and mergers law, but from memory I think —I apologise if I have it wrong—that the referral of a takeover of a water company with an asset value of less than £30 million would depend on whether the combined assets of that company and the company seeking to take it over exceeded £30 million.

Dr. Cunningham: That is wrong.

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps it is wrong. I was trying to help my hon. Friend. If the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) knows more about it than I do, let him say so. He has not so far shown any prowess in this matter.

I confirm that there is no bias against any nationality in making this announcement; it applies equally to all nations. It would be quite wrong for me to bring forward any measure that discriminated against a fellow Community country. We are not allowed to do that and want to see an internal market as well as a common market.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Secretary of State's statement makes him and the whole concept of water privatisation look ridiculous. Is this not a classic French farce in which the Government are locking the bedroom door and inviting Madeleine back in in five years' time? Is not the right hon. Gentleman aware that, if a golden share is necessary now, it should be necessary for ever? Only on those grounds would the European Community countenance this proposal. Otherwise it would be thrown out, and so it should be.

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that there is anything wrong with takeovers. The possibility of takeover is one of the great spurs to greater efficiency in this industry. I am astonished that the right hon. Gentleman believes that the Community would look more kindly upon a permanent special share than upon a temporary special share to protect fledgling industry. He seems to have overlooked the fact that what I announced, which can be paraphrased

as "one company, one owner" would stop the French coming back to take water authorities. Each of the three big French companies already owns one of the qualifying water companies, which means that they cannot even contemplate bidding for a water authority as well.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend tell us why the French should be so interested in our water companies? Do they know something that we do not? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his objection is to monopoly, whether it be French or British?

Mr. Ridley: The reasons why the French are so interested in our water industry are not for me to go into, but they must feel that they can run the companies very well. That must have been one reason why they showed interest in them.

I should correct what I said earlier; I apologise to the House. The assets test applies to £30 million gross assets in the takeover target. Reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in such circumstances is discretionary but not mandatory.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Who chose the £30 million figure? Why was the £30 million figure chosen? The Secretary of State has put that figure to the House, but it is not wholly clear whether he chose the figure.

Mr. Ridley: That is the figure in the monopolies legislation above which a reference must be made. That is the reason for choosing the figure. It happens to fit very well with the particular statistics of this industry.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): How many of the 28 statutory water companies are now controlled by shareholders outside the United Kingdom, and how many of them are controlled by any of the 10 water authorities in England and Wales? Is it not surprising that my right hon. Friend's statement, which will limit the monopoly and the potential of monopoly abuse in the water industry, has not been welcomed by the Labour party, which has always claimed to be against monopoly?

Mr. Ridley: The answer to the first question is that at present three water companies are controlled by non-British companies. There are 10 water authorities and they control no water companies. I ceased some time ago to wonder at what the Opposition say.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State said that the Secretary of State for Wales would make a statement in due course this afternoon. I do not know whether you, Mr. Speaker, are aware that a statement will be made in the House. If not, Welsh Members will be considerably dismayed to learn that a statement will not be made on such an important matter so that we can cross-examine Ministers in the House.

On the general aspects, many people would have welcomed a golden share on the basis that it existed to safeguard the public interest, but the public interest does not run out after five years; it is a continuing interest interest. What proposals has the Secretary of State, therefore, to maintain the safeguarding of the public interest after five years? Will he consider special shares for consumers in those water authority areas that could collectively provide veto?

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will not be making a statement. I used the word "announcement".

The hon. Gentleman asked about preserving the public interest in this most vital industry of water supply. I gather that he is a member of the Standing Committee on the Water Bill. He will find that the Bill is full of ways to ensure such things as water, sewage and effluent quality and a whole range of other provisions to secure the public interest. That can be done through the legislation, irrespective of ownership.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): As Northumbria has been mentioned earlier in this exchange, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend agrees that there is no better supporter of the consumer—water consumer or otherwise—in the north-east than my noble Friend and former colleague Lord Elliott? Does he further agree that this is a thoroughly sensible amendment to a most important Bill, and that the sooner it is put on the statute book the better?

Mr. Ridley: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to Lord Elliott and to Sir Michael Straker, who are both doing an excellent job despite what Opposition Members say. My hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that I agree that the statement and the Bill are excellent.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In how many profitable French water companies is there any substantial, significant or controlling British interest? If the answer is none, why is that? Does the Secretary of State believe that water is as essential as oil because in many of the 15 companies to which my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred the level of foreign ownership certainly exceeds the level at which Kuwait was obliged to dispose of a large proportion of its shares in British Petroleum?

Mr. Ridley: I am not aware of the extent of British participation in the equities of the three French water companies. I gather that there are only three large water companies, but I have no doubt that some British interests own some of the shares, although I do not know how many. The French companies have been so successful and powerful because they have not been run on the local authority or public enterprise models. They have been run on the model of commercial companies which can move around the world and do business around the world as well as in France. We should note the powerful and successful companies which have been created. Perhaps we have something to learn from that. We may learn that it is better to put water in the private sector.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend realise that many of us share his dislike of public monopolies? However, will he explain why private monopolies will be so much better? Private monopolies have a different object from public monopolies. Why will privately owned water be better for those who consume it and have nowhere else to turn for that vital commodity?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend should know that the proposed system of regulation will stop the consumer being exploited by monopolies—*[Interruption.]* I hope that my hon. Friend will listen to my answer. If the private company which owns a licence wants to make more

[Mr. Ridley]

money, it will have to increase its efficiency and standard of service to consumers. That has been the effect of regulated private monopolies wherever they have been properly regulated. The safeguards in the Water Bill will add to that protection. I should have thought that my hon. Friend would agree that that was the way to get a better service as well as good environmental protection.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not ludicrous beyond belief that the proposals designed to prevent monopoly among regionally independently owned water companies will not apply to any of the bids already initiated for the water companies which serve more than one fifth of those who get their water supply from private water companies? In view of today's statement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the £60 million bids for the Newcastle and Gateshead and Sunderland and South Shields companies—which have a monopoly over most of the north-east—will not go to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, does not the Secretary of State fear that he has not only locked the door after the horse has bolted, but helped the horse out of the stable as well?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman would have been one of the first to criticise the Government if we had proposed retrospective legislation. We are not doing that. The legislation will take effect from this morning, but not before people knew what the legislation would do. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that legislation is necessary. We cannot announce that we are going to legislate unless there is a vehicle in which to legislate. It is not clear whether the water companies have been taken over yet. The hon. Gentleman referred to 25 per cent. of the water industry already subject to takeover from foreign interests. I repeat that, apart from the two companies about which there is uncertainty, only three companies are controlled by French companies at the moment.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is it not complete nonsense to talk about running away from market forces when all the monopolies legislation is designed to counter market forces? Is it not important to achieve the delicate balance between ensuring that water companies remain subject to the healthy threat of takeover and ensuring that there is not such a concentration in the industry that the regulator is unable to do his job because of the lack of comparative information? Is that not what my right hon. Friend's proposals achieve?

Mr. Ridley: I have to admit that my hon. Friend puts it very much better than I did in the statement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is there not something a little incongruous about a Secretary of State who only a short time ago, when introducing the Water Bill, was in favour of market forces come hell or high water, and who then comes along with a Perrier amendment based on comparative competition? Where did he find that new theory? Will it mean that a consumer in one area who finds that his water is too dear has an opportunity under the system of comparative competition to get on his bike and move elsewhere? If the very basis on which the Water Bill was introduced has fallen foul of the takeover bids, would it not make more sense to chuck the Bill in the Seine?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman would benefit, as always, from reading my speech on Second Reading of the Water Bill. I set out the Government's intention to achieve comparative competition and to prevent concentration in the industry. I said that I would announce the details as soon as possible. That is what I am doing today. The hon. Gentleman will find that, far from wishing to allow market forces, as he calls them, to run riot, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said, in controlling monopolies it is necessary to control market forces. That is the effect of the statement.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does my right hon. Friend agree that comparative competition will greatly assist the Director General of Water Services when he tries to place a valuation on the companies?

Mr. Ridley: If the director general is to set a price level for each company which is fair to protect consumers and adequate to allow the company to earn a decent return, it is vital that he should be able to see which companies operate cheaper and better than others and the potential for improvement. Comparative competition is a vital tool in his armoury to ensure that the consumer is protected.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is the Secretary of State saying that the final decision on the matter that he has announced today is not in his hands or in those of the elected Government, but in the hands of the European Commission? Will he make it absolutely clear that final power has moved from this House and this Government to the Common Market, of which he is an avid supporter? Does he agree that, as he is apparently trying to grapple with and control market forces which he has supported for so many years, one of the best ways of doing that is through public ownership and democratic control, which he is abandoning through this privatisation measure? Is it not time that he made it clear that he is robbing people of publicly owned water supplies which are bound to be monopolies—he knows that full well—and selling them to the highest bidder?

Mr. Ridley: I assume that the hon. Gentleman does not like the European Community or the Water Bill. However, his prejudices should not be allowed to dominate our proceedings on the Bill. The European Community, as he knows, has an interest in competition throughout the Community. He knows perfectly well that on previous occasions it has been necessary to agree with the Community the arrangements that we make for safeguarding competition in this country. There is nothing new about that. The hon. Gentleman does not like the Bill. No doubt he voted against its Second Reading and found that he was in the minority in the vote. As a good democrat, I am sure that he will accept the majority decision.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reason why some French companies want to buy into our water industry is that they recognise that, with privatisation, there will be greater efficiency and higher standards and that they will make profits from that? Does he further agree that it is only in the early days that our water companies will not be able to protect themselves from unfair competition and that when they feel the benefits from the privatisation of the water industry they will be able to stand on their own feet, and that we will show the French a thing or two?

Mr. Ridley: That is entirely right, and I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. It will be interesting to see whether water companies purchased by the French perform better than under their predecessors. We shall then have a good test of the comparative ability of the different owners to supply a better service and cheaper water to their customers.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Will the Secretary of State explain the basis of what he described as his "high hopes" that the proposals will be acceptable under EEC law? Can he say when he expects to complete his discussions with the Commission? Will he guarantee that members of the Standing Committee will know whether the proposals are acceptable under EEC law before the relevant clauses are reached in Committee? If not, will he guarantee that consideration of the Bill in Committee will be suspended until it is known whether the proposals will stand?

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be taking this matter forward. I cannot say when he hopes to determine the matter with the Community. I hope to publish the draft clauses, which will give the hon. Lady an opportunity to discuss the matter, long before they are reached in Standing Committee. By then it will be easy for the hon. Lady to inquire whether agreement has been reached with Europe. We would not ask the Committee to proceed with a matter that was in doubt. That will not delay the Committee's progress.

European Community

4.11 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. M. Delors, who knows a thing or two about the European Community because he is, I think, President of the Commission, has said that within a short time 80 per cent. of the legislation of the European Community countries will be decided in Brussels, within the Community itself. We are aware of what is called the democratic deficit. It is massive and it is growing. Is the House aware, for example, that the European Community is seeking to introduce a draft directive to require everybody in cars to wear seat belts? This is not the sort of thing that we anticipated would come from the Community.

We have one opportunity every few weeks to ask questions about the European Community, and that was today. But there was not a single question on the Order Paper that was asked on the European Community. The first question to be asked on the European Community was No. 24, and of course we did not reach it; I am not complaining about that. In the past we had a specific slot for European questions. Given the growing impact of European legislation on the House, and given the present massive democratic deficit, I put the plea to you, Mr. Speaker, that you get together with the usual channels with a view to reinstituting the very important facility that the House used to have.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern, and I am aware that, in the past, 10 minutes were allocated to European questions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Twenty minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Twenty minutes, then.

The best course for the hon. Gentleman and for other right hon. and hon. Members to take, if they feel strongly about this matter, is to question the Leader of the House during business questions tomorrow.

Orders of the Day

Employment Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for Employment, I must announce to the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and his hon. Friends.

4.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill is about the widening of employment opportunities for women and young people and the removal of unnecessary burdens on employers. It is introduced against the background of a major reduction in unemployment in this country that is in excess of anything achieved elsewhere in the European Community. Since the general election in June 1987, unemployment has fallen by about 750,000; long-term unemployment has reduced by 350,000—a fall of nearly 30 per cent.; unemployment of young people between 18 and 24 has reduced by 250,000; and the rate of unemployment stands at 7·5 per cent., compared with 10 per cent. in July 1987, with the biggest reductions being in some areas where the problem has previously been greatest—the west midlands, Wales and the north-west.

There are still areas of the country where further improvements are needed, and I recognise that. At this point, the whole House will welcome to the debate the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). [SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] We assumed that the Bill's proposals are so uncontentious that the hon. Gentleman did not intend opposing them. However, we shall wait to hear one of his usual genial speeches.

I shall bring the hon. Member for Oldham, West, up to date. I was seeking to set out the reduction in unemployment in this country.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Labour party do not consider that the Bill is controversial, as they do not even seem to have an amendment on the Order Paper?

Mr. Fowler: We do not want to work them up. I shall keep to what I was going to say and seek to convince any doubters there may be—including the hon. Member for Oldham, West, who is now settling down.

I recognise that there are still areas of the country where further improvements are needed. It should equally be recognised that it would be folly to put all those achievements at risk by unjustified pay increases. The one sure effect of excessive pay increases is fewer jobs, and that must be recognised by unions and employers alike.

By any measure, this country's employment position has dramatically improved in the past 18 months, and there is no reason why that should not continue. Our latest estimate shows that there are more than 700,000 unfilled job vacancies throughout the country. There are new opportunities for unemployed people, but there are also opportunities more generally. The Bill is about extending opportunities for women and young people in the labour market and taking further action to bring down the barriers standing in the way of developing employment.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Given the Secretary of State's strictures against what he calls "excessive pay increase", will he tell the House how he voted on the 1988-89 wage increases for Members of Parliament of more than 25 per cent. or £110 per week?

Mr. Fowler: I would have voted in favour of the proposed increase. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to bandy figures about the salaries of Members of Parliament, I may tell him that Ministers such as myself are taking a 3 per cent. increase in the current year, which I believe is substantially less in percentage terms than the increase that the hon. Gentleman is taking.

In the labour market of the 1990s, there will certainly be new openings for women, and it is vital that they are taken. Women already play a vital part in many of our industries and professions, but their role in the economy will need to increase. The labour market is already changing dramatically, and it will change more. In particular, the number of young school leavers will substantially reduce. The number of 16 to 19-year-olds has already begun to drop, and by 1995 it will fall by more than 500,000—a drop of nearly 25 per cent.

Employers will not be able to rely on a steady stream of young people to meet their recruitment needs. They will have to develop their existing work forces' full potential through training, and take full advantage of other potential sources of recruitment. Clearly, women are among the most important of those.

The Bill then tackles some of the issues of sex discrimination in circumstances where discrimination is not only unfair to its victims but damaging to the economy. It does it on the basis that a nation that fails to use fully the skills and talents of more than half of its population will be competing with one hand tied behind its back. The Bill sweeps away a number of archaic restrictions on women's employment. It introduces a general rule that equal opportunity takes precedence over restrictions on women's employment. Restrictions are retained only where they can be strictly justified. The Bill also gives women the right to statutory redundancy payments up to the same age as men—a further step towards equality.

Let me emphasise just how many women are working outside the home in this country. Over 10 million women are working. Women now make up about 43 per cent. of the total labour force, and 60 per cent. of women under 65 are employed or seeking employment. That is a higher proportion than in any other European Community country, with the exception of Denmark.

The increase in women working has been evident in all areas. There are certainly more women working in service industries such as retailing. But at the same time the proportion of women in the total entry to the professions —medicine, law, accountancy—has increased dramatically over the past 10 years. The proportion of young women taking courses of further and higher education is now greater than that of young men.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the overwhelming majority of working women work in low-paid employment, and that their position is getting worse? Will he tell us whether

he has any proposals to improve that position, if he wants to invite more women into the labour market? Why is he suggesting that wage councils might be abolished, when that would make the position of those women worse?

Mr. Fowler: We have set out the position on wage councils in the consultation document, and I shall obviously want to make a statement about it in due course.

The position is changing. Women will want not only jobs but careers. They will expect not just equal rights but equal promotion opportunities. The wise employer and the forward-looking professions will recognise that.

We must take away restrictions which can stand in the way of women finding jobs or pursuing careers, and it is from the same standpoint that we have reviewed the position of young people. The philosophy of the Bill is that they too are entitled to every job opportunity compatible with a proper concern for their health and safety. They should not be denied access to jobs for arbitrary or irrelevant reasons, least of all restrictions based on the labour market of the last century.

Let me make it clear who is affected. All the restrictions on the employment of children—that is, people under the minimum school leaving age—will be retained. The people about whom the Bill is concerned are those between school leaving age and 18: broadly speaking, the 16 to 18-year-old group. Here too we are preserving restrictions on employment that are demonstrably necessary.

For example, we are preserving all the safeguards necessary for health and safety, and regulations such as those on working with dangerous machinery and the sale of alcohol. What we are taking away are the complex restrictions on the hours of work of young people. We are doing that partly because there is no evidence that hours of work affect those between 16 and 18 differently from those over 18. It is an arbitrary distinction, but above all we are doing it because such restrictions can have a detrimental effect on young people's employment opportunities.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The right hon. Gentleman has talked about removing restrictions on women's employment. Some of us are doubtful about how far that will be achieved by this measure. But as it is an Employment Bill giving an opportunity for the lifting of restrictions, why does it contain no mention of discrimination against disabled people—or, indeed, of the fact that well over three quarters of firms in this country still do not apply the quota?

Mr. Fowler: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are at present reviewing the position of disabled people at work, and when the review is complete I shall want to make an announcement. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern; as it happens, I think that the position has improved substantially over the past few years, but I should like it to be improved further.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): My point concerns the abolition of the protection governing young people's hours of work that has rightly applied for many years. Just as they did last year, the Government are tying in the Employment Bill with social security legislation. They say that young people are being given better opportunities for employment; but what will happen is that young people will have to accept jobs whether they like it or not.

Under the Bill, some small firms with 20 or fewer employees will not have to provide conditions for their employment. A young person therefore may not like a job, and may leave it. He will then be affected by the new social security regulations. This is clearly a plot to ensure that young people no longer have the right to the employment of their choice, or the right to work a short week and not be exploited by employers.

Mr. Fowler: It is not a plot at all. We are trying to take away restrictions and regulations that, in some cases, stand in the way of employment opportunities for precisely the group about whom the hon. Gentleman professess concern.

Many of the present rules governing young people's hours are absurdly complex and cannot be justified. For example, one of the provisions in the Factories Act 1961 is that in any factory employing young people between 16 and 18 the law requires them all to start work, take their breaks and finish work at exactly the same time. Section 112 excepts young persons aged 16 or over from the hours of work provisions in the Act where they are employed in preserving, canning or curing fish, preparing fish for sale or preserving or canning fruit or vegetables from June to September. That is subject to restrictions on hours laid down in the Fruit and Vegetable Preserving (Hours of Women and Young Persons) Regulations 1939.

Section 113 excepts young persons aged 16 or over from the hours of work provisions in part VI of the Act where they are employed in the manufacture of dairy products. Their hours of work must not, however, exceed 54 hours a week, except where they are employed in the manufacture of cheese at certain times of the year, where they may be increased to 60. That is included in the Milk and Cheese Factories (Hours of Women and Young Persons) Regulations 1949. The Railway Employment Exemption Regulations 1962 exempt males aged 16 or over employed as engine cleaners, firemen or signal box lads.

There is a whole series of such regulations. Section 109 of the Factories Act allows young persons who are Jewish, where they work in a factory where the occupier is Jewish, to be employed on Sunday, provided that the factory is not open for business on that day and is closed on Saturday. Where an occupier uses this exception, those provisions of the Act regarding Sunday should be read as referring to Saturday, and those provisions regarding Saturday should be read as referring to Friday or Sunday.

With respect, I think that even the hon. Member for Oldham, West, when he has caught up with what the Bill is about, will concede that some parts of the legislation are indefensible. But it is restrictions like that that the Labour party, which is now nosing its way into the 1950s is fighting to preserve. Indeed, it is worse than that. The hon. Member for Oldham, West is the John Betjeman of the statute book: show him a Victorian statute and he will fight to preserve it.

The present law is full of such anomalies. The great majority of these restrictions serve no useful purpose and there is no evidence that there is any difference between areas of work where hours have been regulated, such as factories and shops, and areas where there have been no restrictions on hours, such as offices.

The only sure thing is that the complexity of the present legislation deters employers from taking young people into employment. The Bill continues the drive that my

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Department is making to deregulate the labour market. As a result, this Bill sweeps away two whole Acts, 55 sections and subsections of six other Acts and 22 statutory instruments which, between them, contain over 100 provisions regulating young people's hours of work.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Under the arrangement of clauses, Nos. 7 and 8 are headed "Removal of restrictions on employment." While I abhor the restrictions that my right hon. Friend is abolishing, when do the Government intend to abolish the restrictions on employment in the docks, under the dock labour scheme, that the trade unions have enforced, which would allow those who wish to work in the docks to do so without restriction?

Mr. Fowler: The issue has been raised before, but the Bill does not cover my hon. Friend's point.

In addition to the provisions to which I have referred, the Bill seeks to remove unnecessary burdens on business. It formally abolishes the Training Commission, previously the Manpower Services Commission. I shall deal later with both of those matters.

Turning to the detail of the Bill, the first six clauses amend the existing law defining the relationship between the legislation on sex discrimination—principally, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975—and other legislation.

It has always been the policy of this Government that discrimination between the sexes should be avoided unless there are special circumstances which positively require it, such as the protection of pregnant women. We also have an obligation under the European Communities equal treatment directive to remove any legislation that is contrary to the principle of equal treatment of the sexes and we fully accept that obligation.

Britain's obligations under the directive were largely implemented by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The 1975 Act did not in itself take any steps to remove existing legislation that conflicted with the principle of equal treatment. The approach followed by successive Governments has been that any such legislation could be reviewed and repealed or amended on a case-by-case basis as the need arose.

The 1975 Act itself did no more than preserve the status quo. Under section 51 of the Act, any earlier legislation, which requires people to discriminate between the sexes, overrides the prohibition of discrimination in the 1975 Act.

The 1975 Act is then open to the criticism that this automatic precedence given to discriminatory requirements is in conflict with the equal treatment directive. The Government have considered the matter carefully and have concluded that on balance there is a conflict with the directive. Therefore, the Bill puts that right. It reverses the priority given to existing discriminatory legislation. In future, the prohibition of discrimination will take precedence.

In December 1987 we issued a consultation document proposing how this should be done. The Bill broadly seeks to implement the proposals in that document. There may be cases where the requirements in the earlier legislation, though discriminatory, are still objectively justified. For instance, there may be strong health and safety reasons for retaining them. In such cases the directive allows exceptions to be made. So the new approach we are taking is this. We have conducted a thorough review of legislation enacted before the 1975 Act to identify requirements that discriminate between the sexes. The results of this review are set out in the consultation document.

Where such requirements are, in our view, still justified and consistent with the directive, the Bill will allow them to continue in force. For example, we are retaining protection for women in areas—such as working with lead or radiation—where there could be danger to an unborn child. We are also retaining an exemption for different treatment of the sexes in a few special cases in education. Where, on the other hand, discriminatory provisions are not justified, the Bill will repeal them or amend them to remove the unjustified discrimination.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Secretary of State says that women will not have to work with radiation. Will he explain why anybody should have to work with radiation?

Mr. Fowler: We are seeking in this Bill to recognise the particular problems that face women under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. They include the danger to the unborn child from lead or radiation. That is why we have made that exception.

Taken together, the first six clauses of the Bill contain a new and coherent approach to the problem of conflicting legislation. They will ensure that we meet our Community obligations, but beyond that they are an indication of the priority that we attach to equality of opportunity.

Clause 7 takes this a step further. It repeals a number of archaic restrictions on the employment of women. The most important of these is the prohibition on women working for any length of time underground in mines and quarries. This prohibition goes back in part to the 1840s.

We have a straight choice here. Because of the action we are taking on section 51, we must seek either to re-enact this prohibition or to lift it. The difficulty with the present blanket prohibition is that it not only prevents women working at the coal face but, much more to the point, it prevents women from developing careers as mining engineers, mining surveyors and managers. We believe that that is an unjustified restraint. It is for that reason that we are removing it.

The present restrictions are an obstacle to women working not only as face workers but as managers, engineers, or in any other professional function underground. Nor is that a theoretical point. Let me quote from a letter sent by two women students at the Sheffield city polytechnic to *The Independent* on 28 November. They said:

> "With regard to the reforming of the employment laws relating to women working underground, we would like to express our delight that at last equal opportunities will triumph over this antiquated piece of legislation.
>
> As students in mine surveying, we can now look forward to a greater choice in our job prospects, to options previously closed to us due to the fact that we are female.
>
> This proposal should be seen as a move forward for the extractive industry and not a return to Victorian values, as Norman Willis believes. Only too often, we have come across this chauvinistic attitude—that mines are no places for women to work. We would remind Mr. Willis that there is more to mining than the 'pick and shovel', as any mine engineer (male or female) will tell him."

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Secretary of State has not yet learnt his lesson. Why does he not take note of

many recent comments about women working underground in the pits? The regulations were introduced for a particular reason. The Secretary of State has not yet been underground to have a look for himself, and I am prepared to bet that he would not dare to take a look underground. Many hon. Members know what coal mining is all about.

Why does the Secretary of State not take seriously the points that have been made so that he gets the full picture as to why women should not be allowed to work underground? I shall end with this point—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] No, it is not too long. The two so-called young ladies at the Sheffield city polytechnic to whom the Secretary of State referred had had a sex change.

Mr. Fowler: I shall leave it to *The Independent* to check up on the hon. Gentleman's last allegation. However, I shall try to answer in detail his lengthy intervention. I understand, although I am subject to correction on this point, that when he last spoke on the matter the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Oldham, West—who even now is being briefed on the subject—said that he did not oppose the proposal. We look forward to hearing his views later in the debate.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Fowler: No. I should prefer to finish my answer to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), although I know that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) always expects to be given precedence.

Ms. Short: The Secretary of State should stop being so rude.

Mr. Fowler: As for going underground, I make the hon. Member for Ashfield a fair offer. I am certainly prepared to go down a mine, as long as the hon. Gentleman is prepared to come down with me and show me the way.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State knows that I worked in a pit for 35 years and it would be nothing for me to make another visit. I am talking about the Secretary of State who has never been down a pit.

Mr. Fowler: I am asking for the hon. Gentleman's help and advice. I recognise his experience and importance in this matter.

In their letter to *The Independent* the two ladies—who can reply to his allegations themselves—said:

> "When will these so-called intelligent men realise that women are as competent and efficient as themselves and that we will be treated as equals?"

That is the genuine response to the point made by the hon. Member for Ashfield.

Mr. Cryer: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fowler: No. I have given way several times.

Clause 8 deals with restrictions on young people's employment. The consultation document contains the results of a review of a mass of legislation in that area.

The review revealed a jumble of restrictions on young people's hours of work with no rhyme and very little reason to them. Different rules applied to factories, mines and shops, while other sectors, such as offices, farms and hospitals, had never been regulated at all. In many cases, the legislation had its roots in the 19th century and had been amended and consolidated in a piecemeal way at intervals ever since. In the regulated sectors, there were generally some restrictions on maximum hours of work and working at night, but there was little consistency between different industries.

The position has changed radically since Victorian or even pre-war days, and the progressive raising of the school-leaving age means that the age range covered by the regulations on young people's employment now covers only 16 to 18-year-olds, not younger children, as was often the case when the restrictions were introduced.

We also now have a comprehensive framework of protection under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which imposes general duties on employers not to expose employees to conditions, including hours of work, which would endanger their health and safety. That also applies to 16 to 18-year-olds.

Circumstances have changed so much that there should be no presumption that special protection is needed. In our review of the legislation, we have concluded that many of the restrictions are now unnecessary and the Bill will remove them. However, I stress that we are keeping all the safeguards that the Health and Safety Commission advises us are desirable for health and safety reasons—for instance, on working with dangerous machinery and chemicals. We are also keeping restrictions on the sale of alcohol, and in betting and gaming, where young people's welfare must be taken into account. We recognise that these are special cases. I must also emphasise that nothing in the Bill will affect the employment of children below the minimum school leaving age. All the safeguards in that area are left untouched.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Perhaps my right hon. Friend will tell me why, in this spirit of getting rid of all these regulations, it is perfectly lawful for a bookmaker to employ someone to work in the back office of a betting shop and take bets on a telephone but not over the counter? If the moral argument is that people under 18 should not be associated with gambling in any employment context, surely the law should make that absolutely clear and not allow the current anomaly, which is perpetuating a myth.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend has made a fair point about what is clearly an anomaly. The Government have not extended to the front counter the freedom which my hon. Friend says exists in the back office. Doubtless that is something we shall discuss in Committee.

The Bill will greatly simplify the rules governing the employment of young people. It will widen their opportunities and remove disincentives to employers. The simplification of this law is long overdue.

The Bill provides for a number of amendments to be made to other legislation, to ease the burden of regulation on employers. These stem from proposals contained in the White Paper, which we published in May 1986. My right hon. Friend, the Minister of State, with his special responsibility for small businesses, will deal with those clauses in detail. We are seeking to strike a balance between safeguarding employees' rights and enabling employers to improve their competitiveness and create new job opportunities.

For example, clause 9 exempts employers with fewer than 20 employees from the requirement to provide their employees with particulars of any disciplinary procedures which apply to them.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] The

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reason is that now such statements set out who deals with the matter at each level of the organisation. Clearly, small firms have limited administrative resources and are, by definition, smaller. Often, the employer will deal personally with staff grievances. All employers will still have to give employees the name of the person to whom they can go if they have a grievance.

Clause 10 restricts the duties for which paid time off can be allowed.

Clause 11 increases from six months to two years the qualifying period of employment after which employees are entitled to be given on request a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal. That brings the qualifying period into line with that for unfair dismissal complaints.

Another important provision is intended to deter ill-founded applications to industrial tribunals. Clause 16 enables me to provide that the chairman of an industrial tribunal can hold a pre-hearing review of a tribunal case and, where he considers a case has no reasonable prospect of success, or appears to be frivolous, vexatious or unreasonable, to require the person to make a deposit of up to £150 as a condition of taking the case further.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fowler: I have given way many times already and I should like to move on.

That does not mean that all applicants will have to make a deposit. I would expect only a small minority of cases to be affected. Also, £150 is not a set amount: it is the maximum. It seems entirely reasonable that someone who has a weak case should be made to think carefully before putting all concerned to the trouble and expense of a full hearing.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I will not give way. It is not in the hon. Gentlemens' own interest to press ahead with a hopeless case.

Clause 12 provides for women to receive statutory redundancy payments up to the same age as men—up to 65 or to the same normal retirement age if that is lower in a particular firm. I believe that that will be generally welcomed.

Clause 13 is a further amendment to the redundancy provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, dealing with redundancy rebates.

In clauses 14 and 15 the Bill also makes some technical amendments to the insolvency provisions of the 1978 Act. Those are intended to expedite payments out of the redundancy fund to employees of insolvent businesses, and to make it easier for my Department to recover such payments from liquidators or receivers.

Clause 17, provides for the abolition of the requirement under the Celluloid and Cinematograph Film Act 1922 whereby firms wishing to store celluloid film on their premises must register with the local authority and pay an annual £2 fee. The reason for that is to remove the requirement to abolish the registration fee and the need to register with the local authority, given that most people are now using acetate instead of celluloid.

Clause 18 is an important clause and formally dissolves the Training Commission. The history of the abolition of the commission is well known. Formerly we had a commission which was in effect nominated by different parties—three commissioners were nominated by the Confederation of British Industry and three by the Trades Union Congress and there were three others representing different interests such as education and local authorities. Basically that system broke down because of the TUC's action in relation to its own commissioners' proposals. In 1987 the TUC commissioners agreed a programme called the new job training scheme but when it went to the TUC General Council it voted to boycott the programme—which it did, to the damage of that programme and the interests of unemployed people.

We had a repeat performance when it came to employment training for long-term unemployed people. Again, the programme was agreed by the TUC commissioners, including at that time Mr. Ron Todd the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. Mr. Todd first withdrew his support and then campaigned against the programme of which he had been co-author. Partly because of that, partly because of a failure of leadership of the hon. Member for Oldham, West and in spite of a last-minute appeal by the Leader of the Opposition, the TUC decided to boycott employment training. Fortunately, that has had little effect on employment training and there are now more than 100,000 people on the programme.

We were left with a position where three of the commissioners were committed to a policy of opposition to the biggest programme being run by the Training Commission. That was an unacceptable and untenable position, which inevitably led to the Government's announcement that the commission would be abolished.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West and the Opposition bear a heavy responsibility for presiding over that policy. The TUC and the Opposition quite deliberately turned their backs on long-term unemployed people in this country. Frankly, we are not prepared to take lectures from the hon. Gentleman on training policy in Britain, either in the House or in the many newspaper articles that he writes.

In place of the old system there is a framework for training with a number of features which I draw to the attention of the House. Instead of the Training Commission we shall have a new Training Agency directly accountable to me as Secretary of State, but with substantial management independence and with the benefit of the commission staff who have had very great success in delivering training programmes in this country.

Rather than nine commissioners I am appointing a national training task force—which is employer-led, including the heads of IBM, NFC, Tarmac, Grand Metropolitan and the Scottish Development Agency. Its members also include people with experience of trade unions, local authorities, chambers of commerce and voluntary organisations. By any standards it is the best team on training that has ever been put together in this country.

The team's first job will be to set up the first training and enterprise councils which will not only take over from the old area manpower boards but will also have important new powers and responsibilities. We envisage that eventually there will be a network of about 100 councils—which again are industry-led—and they will be

responsible for assessing the training needs of the local area, managing training programmes for the unemployed such as employment training, and, crucially, for promoting training for employers in the local area.

Those changes add up to a very substantial revolution in training, and rightly so. In my view nothing is more important than that we improve the training standards in this country. It is a structure which gives employers the opportunity to plan for the future not on the basis of some remote national plan but on the basis of the needs in the local labour market. It will be their responsibility to ensure that their staff are trained to international standards. It will also be their responsibility to ensure that the people without jobs are trained to fill the jobs without people. It is only by improving training that we will ensure our competitiveness in the future.

One of the reasons why employment in this country is improving faster than that of the other European Community countries is that we have taken down some of the barriers that have stood in the way of jobs. We have tackled, for example, the problem of bad industrial relations which in the 1960s and 1970s succeeded in exporting British job after British job overseas. We have lifted the burden of regulations and restrictions which hindered the growth of businesses and jobs in the 1970s and previous decades. We have taken a number of steps to increase the flexibility of the labour market, and we have now set in hand the biggest revolution in training arrangements there has ever been in this country—a revolution which is designed to ensure the supply of skilled labour that our industries and services will need to sustain economic growth into the 1990s and beyond.

The Bill continues that process. It removes obstacles that stand in the way of some women taking jobs and it at long last reforms the position of young people. It is another step in the process of lifting restrictions and encouraging employment. The Department of Employment stands for policies of deregulation, because such policies will create new jobs and lead to the further reduction of unemployment in Britain.

4.55 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): The Secretary of State claimed that the Bill is designed to meet the demographic gap in the labour market that will be produced by the shortage of school leavers in the next seven years. If that is its aim, it is remarkably badly targeted. But of course it is nothing of the sort; it is yet another Bill from the Government's ideological stables. As the Secretary of State said, it is a deregulatory measure. It will enhance the power of employers to hire and fire at will but will do nothing to provide the increased work force that the economy needs for the 1990s. It is a Bill not about increasing employment but about diminishing employment rights.

The right hon. Gentleman has recently taken on something of the role of a soothsayer. Tearing his hair, he laments in the columns of the press that a great demographic change is upon us—repent all ye employers of little training and no creches or ye shall surely perish in a famine of skill shortages and school leaver shortages.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He will when she sacks him.

Mr. Meacher: I shall come to that later.

We waited for the oracle to speak again and give us the solutions to all our woes, and now we have them. First, the Bill allows women to work down the pits—that is, those pits that the right hon. Gentleman's fellow Ministers have not seen fit to close. What a decisive contribution that will make to opening up the labour market of the 1990s. Secondly, it seeks to get what young people there are to work longer hours.

Mr. Fowler *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman seeks to intervene a little early. If he wishes to speak now, he certainly will not get in later.

Mr. Fowler: Even at this early stage, will the hon. Gentleman tell us his position on opening up opportunities for women to work underground?

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is displaying his usual impatience. If he can contain himself, it will certainly be made clear to him.

The second object of the Bill is to get what young people there are to work longer hours—54 hours a week—and to allow 16-year-olds to work nights. Mr. Gradgrind would turn in his grave. The Bill seeks to make it easier to give someone the sack and harder for them to find out why they have been sacked or to take their case to a tribunal. What is astonishing about this blinkered, one-sided attack on employees' rights is that this little Bill displays breathtaking inadequacy in the face of the fundamental changes in the labour market.

The right hon. Gentleman presents us with a picture of a demographic time bomb—a 23 per cent. drop in the number of 16 to 19-year-old school leavers in the next six years. He is quite right that we need to plan for that gap now. Basically, there are only three options. The first is to bring more unemployed people back into work. There is not a word about the unemployed in the Bill. The second option is to retrain more older workers. There is not a word in the Bill about older workers. The third option is to help more married women to return to work. What does the Secretary of State do to encourage them? He legislates to enable them to go down the mines. That is his answer to discrimination at work and to restrictions in the labour market. If it were not written in black and white in a Government Bill, one might think that he had pinched it from a "Carry On" film.

In November the Secretary of State made a speech in which he said that discrimination by employers against women or blacks in the new demographic climate would mean cutting off a source of skilled labour that they could ill afford to ignore. That must mean that women must have the same career opportunities as men. The Secretary of State has now given an example of what he means by that, because the Bill will allow women to go underground in mines and quarries. The other major initiative is that it will remove the prohibition on women cleaning moving machinery in factories.

In his speech, the Secretary of State urged employers to give women a better deal, but the Government are major employers and what example do they set? This Government provide the least publicly funded child care in western Europe. They are the only Government who do not give maternity leave to all mothers as a right. This Government have abolished the maternity grant that was available to all, making us the only country in Europe in

[Mr. Meacher]

that position. Can we really believe that the Government are looking to women to fill gaps in the labour market when they have given women no incentive to play a fuller role?

Women have been hit hardest by many of the changes that the Government have made. The Secretary of State has taken away the rights of low-paid workers, and it is women who have suffered most. The Government have twice frozen child benefit—the only benefit that goes directly to mothers. They have made repeated cuts in the welfare state, and groups such as single mothers are forced to struggle to make ends meet. When the Government under-fund the National Health Service and the social services, it is women who end up caring for dependent relatives, whether they like it or not. No one is taken in by the Bill. What job opportunities matter to women? It is not the right to dig coal but the availability of proper child care and flexible hours of work.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the NHS and women in the same breath. Does he not remember that the last Labour Government cut nurses' pay in real terms?

Mr. Meacher: That is a silly comment, in view of the present row about the Government's unwillingness to meet the proper clinical regrading needs and the continuing unrest among nurses. When, under Labour, the Clegg award was made to the NHS, the 500,000 nurses working in the NHS were far better rewarded during those four years than they are now. There is continual unrest because the nurses are unwilling to accept the way in which they are not being properly graded. If the Secretary of State does not know that, he should visit many of our hospitals. It is a disgrace that, with a £15 billion surplus—according to the Chancellor of the Exchequer—nurses are still not paid properly despite their devotion.

Mr. Fowler *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way.

If one wants to hear the authentic voice of Thatcherism, one needs only to look at the Prime Minister's sacked "Egg Minister," who said a few months ago:

> "Our view is that it is for the parents who go out to work to decide how best to care for their children. If they want or need help in their task, they should make the appropriate arrangements and meet the cost."

That is a fine view for female Ministers who can afford boarding schools and nannies, but it is not so good for working mothers on £70 a week, especially when in another niggardly piece of legislation the Government have chosen to tax workplace creches on the same basis as company cars, as though they were a perk.

Employers in this country have a poor record in their treatment of women, but they do not need lectures from the Secretary of State about giving women a better deal when his own Government have systematically cut the rights of women workers, especially part-timers, to claim unfair dismissal and to receive proper maternity pay. They do not need lectures from the Secretary of State when his Government now provide for only 1 per cent. of under-fives in local authority day nurseries and even those places are not available for the children of those who are in work.

They do not need lectures from him when in his previous incarnation, at the Department of Health and Social Security, the right hon. Gemtleman was responsible last April for the abolition of child care costs up to £40 a week in the disregard for single mothers on income support, thus trapping them in dependency and preventing them from going back to work. He may shake his head —perhaps he is not aware that he did that. He then has the gall to talk this afternoon about equal opportunities for women. Above all, employers do not need lectures from him about improving career opportunities for women when the Government have removed the right to return to work after pregnancy for women who work in small companies—as most do. How does the Secretary of State explain all those actions?

The Opposition believe that proper child care provision is a long-term investment in the social skills of children and the employment prospects of mothers as well as in the labour force of an economy that is threatened by staff shortages in the 1990s. The complete absence of such measures in the Bill is evidence of the Government's real aim, so for the Secretary of State to preach to us today about others giving equal opportunities to women is sheer hypocrisy.

Another detail in the Bill that caught my eye was a double-take about sex discrimination. The Bill selects certain academic appointments at Oxford and Cambridge, which are currently restricted to women, to be allowed to continue because of the under-representation of women in senior posts. Once again, the sense of priorities and proportion shown by the Secretary of State is mind-blowing. He is, apparently, happy about the number of women on the board of BP and the number who are Law Lords, permanent secretaries or even England cricket selectors, but when it comes to ensuring women's rights to be theology dons at Oxford, that really calls for Government action.

The second main concern in the Bill is young people. There will be 1·25 million fewer young people available to enter the labour market in the mid-1990s, so one would have thought that the maximum number would need to be trained to meet the growing skill shortages. One might have expected that the Bill would do something to remedy the collapse of apprenticeships in the past decade, during which the number of apprenticeships in engineering has fallen to one sixth of the 1979 level.

One might have expected also—assuming that the Secretary of State is a little more willing than the Chancellor of the Exchequer to admit mistakes—that the Bill would remedy the patent failures of the youth training scheme, not least in securing jobs for young people. Obviously, that was too much to hope for. One scours the Bill in vain for any such positive ideas. But for the first time in almost a century—here we are not back to the 1930s, as with the Social Security Bill, but back to the 1880s—teenagers will be exposed to working at night, more than 11 hours a day and more than 54 hours a week. The Bill is concerned not with ending discrimination but with increasing exploitation.

The Secretary of State has made great play of his claim that the main purpose of the Bill is to bring United Kingdom laws into line with European legislation which outlaws sex discrimination. He has not done his homework. How does he explain a recent survey which showed that the majority of European Community

countries have legal limits on the hours of work for both female and male adult workers and even stronger restrictions on the hours worked by young people?

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will give me his attention. How does he explain article 7 of the European social charter which says:

"Persons under 18 years of age shall not be employed in nightwork."

How can that be reconciled with the proposals? I note that the Secretary of State does not leap to the Dispatch Box to give an answer.

The Government's view is apparently that youngsters should be treated as adults but should not be paid an adult wage. The 16 to 18-year-old lacks the maturity to appreciate fully the dangers from machinery, and is generally more prone to accidents because of limited experience. That is precisely why the fatal and serious accident rate for young people in work or on YTS has more than doubled, from 64 to 136 per 100,000 workers, this decade, according to the latest figures. The adult rate in shipbuilding is now 122 per 100,000 workers, so young people are already more at risk from fatal and serious accidents than adults who work in some of Britain's most dangerous industries.

All of this is before longer shifts and excessive hours are imposed on young people as a result of the Bill. The Secretary of State is gambling with young people's lives. If and when the fatal and serious accident rate among young people spirals upwards, on his head be it.

Young people aged 16 to 18 are not adults. That is why they are not deemed responsible enough to vote, to marry without permission, to drink alcohol, to enter legal agreements, to borrow money, to gamble or to own property. If the Government think that they should be treated as adults, why are they not lifting any of those restrictions?

It is inconsistent for the Secretary of State to protect young people on moral grounds by preventing them from purchasing alcoholic drinks or placing bets on horses, while permitting them to work longer hours in a factory. That is sheer hypocrisy and lays bare the real motive behind the Bill—the desire to provide a source of cheap, exploited labour.

We are often told that the Prime Minister's values are Victorian. The truth is apparent in the Bill. They are not so much Victorian as Dickensian.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is suffering under a complete misapprehension of what is set out in the Bill. As I tried to explain earlier, we are preserving the safeguards that are necessary for health and safety. We are preserving regulations such as those concerned with working with dangerous machinery. The hon. Gentleman is saying that those safeguards are not being preserved, but he is wrong.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman's weasel words will not protect him. The fatal and serious accident rate among young people has already more than doubled. Is the right hon. Gentleman telling the House that he is satisfied with that rate and that he believes that it will go down if the Bill is enacted? Will he answer that question? Does he believe that the rate is already too high? Does he believe that it will not get worse as a result of the Bill?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that I would like the accident rate among the working population as a whole to go down. There is no question about that. He is often quite deliberately misleading, however, when he says that there is some special problem with 16 to 18-year-olds, especially in respect of YTS. What he says in that context is out of proportion to what is happening elsewhere. On that, too, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong.

Mr. Meacher: The fatal and serious accident rate among adults has increased by 40 per cent. during the past five years. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting that young people should be assimilated in that rate. He seems to be saying that they should be treated as adults and liable to the same incidence of accidents. The fatal and serious accident rate for adults and young people is going up, and the Bill will make it worse. That is the key point.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend must agree that there is another reason for so many accidents of this type. Since 1979, under the Conservative Government, the number of factory inspectors has been reduced drastically. We have constantly reminded the Government of that fact, but they have done nothing about it.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend is right. There has been a major cut in the number of factory inspectors—their number has been reduced by about 30 per cent. It is no accident—that is not a deliberate pun—that the result has been a huge increase among adults and young people of fatal and serious accidents. The Government are directly responsible in that respect.

Ms. Short: The Secretary of State suggested that there was no connection between the Bill and likely accident rates among young people. Is it not a proven fact that people who work long hours and are tired are more likely to have accidents? The Secretary of State is arranging for young people to work longer hours, so it is inevitable that the accident rate will increase. He must know that.

Mr. Meacher: That is obvious common sense. Only the Secretary of State refuses to see it.

Since last April, the Government have denied 16 to 17-year-olds any entitlement to income support. If they are unable to support themselves, they are expected to rely on their parents. In other words, when it comes to social security and the Government being required to pay out benefit, young people are treated as children. When it comes to employment and young people being treated as cheap labour, however, the Government are only too glad to treat them as adults—except when it comes to pay. The Secretary of State was the architect of the original and notorious Fowler Social Security Bill. Now we have this Employment Bill. How can we be expected to have any faith in the integrity of this man?

The Bill is not about extending job opportunities to young people, as the Secretary of State likes to make out—it is about exploiting them. The right hon. Gentleman will as usual dismiss that statement with a grunt, as he dismissed as a Left-wing cavil the statement that as a result of the Bill

"young people could be obliged to work excessive and unsocial hours by unscrupulous employers"

That statement was made not by the Labour party or the Trades Union Congress but by the Confederation of British Industry, no less, in its response last March to the Government's consultative document on the Bill. I do not think that the CBI is well known for Left-wing cavilling.

[Mr. Meacher]

If the Bill is really about improving job opportunities, we must wonder why the Secretary of State neglected to tell us why it removes the right to a statement of reasons for dismissal and the right to be told about disciplinary procedures or why it is being made much harder to take a case to an industrial tribunal. We have to ask why the Government are intent on making life so much more unpleasant for employees in ways that employers' organisations neither want nor support.

Denying people the right to a statement of the reasons for their dismissal means that, however arbitrary or intemperate the action of an employer, the employee has no protection. We must ask why the right hon. Gentleman insists on pushing through such a grossly one-sided and unjust provision when his own Department's research paper entitled "Unfair Dismissal Law and Employment Practice in the 1980s" found

"very little sign that employment protection legislation was inhibiting industrial recovery or contributing to the high level of unemployment by discouraging employers from taking on new people".

Perhaps the Secretary of State has not even read that document.

What is more, we must ask why the Small Business Research Trust, so beloved of the Conservative party, conducting surveys of small businesses throughout Britain, consistently found that lack of finance, high interest rates and skill shortages were the main constraints on expansion, not fear of unfair dismissal claims. That is no surprise to us. Two out of three of those problems have been caused by the Government, who have done nothing to remedy the situation. When it comes to something which does not bother small businesses, however, in spite of the fact that businesses are not complaining, the Government insist upon attacking it.

The same is true in regard to denying workers in small companies details of grievance and disciplinary procedures. Even the Institute of Personnel Management opposes that move because it has been shown that there is a higher risk of unfair dismissal in small companies, which is where the change will apply, than in large ones. The same is true for the £150 deposit at the discretion of industrial tribunal chairmen. The proposal is rejected by the British Institute of Management because it would be much more of an obstacle for an employee than for an employer and, it says—I have no doubt that it is correct—employers might automatically apply for an order to deter applicants. It is also rejected by the Engineering Employers Federation, for the good reason that it would deter non-unionised employees who might have a genuine case.

If the whole phalanx of employers is against all the Bill's proposals, why does the Secretary of State insist on pressing them? This is the man who won his spurs at the Department of Health and Social Security by bashing the poor with swingeing housing benefit cuts and the infamous social fund. Clearly, he is trying to earn his keep at the Department of Employment by crippling workers' rights. There is nothing like mindless union-bashing and hammering workers for building up credits in the Cabinet stakes, and the right hon. Gentleman needs them. There are no limits to the contortions that he will undergo in that cause.

This is the man who, in the name of democracy, insisted that there must be ballots on industrial action, and then said that the minority did not have to obey them if the vote was in favour. Now, he has gone one better in his draft code of conduct on industrial relations ballots, by saying that the results do not count unless they are at least 70 per cent. in favour. He just makes up the rules as he goes along. Every day he becomes more like the creature in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" who, when reproved by Alice for misusing a word, retorted:

"Words don't mean anything except what I say they mean."

That is the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State is fiddling the rules again. When the Government want to make it almost impossible for people to exercise their rights—for example, by having a closed shop—they require at least 85 per cent. of the vote to be in favour. When the Government cannot get a majority of votes to run the country, they insist that 42 per cent. is enough to disregard the majority who disagree with them. When they wish people to exercise their rights—for example, when they are selling off council estates to private landlords—we suddenly find that a mere 15 per cent. in favour, as in Torbay, is enough to carry the day because they count those who abstain as being in favour.

The only question left is whether the right hon. Gentleman manages to fiddle the unemployment figures down to zero before he contrives to present a nil vote in favour of his reforms as their being carried with acclaim. I know that Papa Doc was satisfied with 99 per cent. for his presidential election, but I wonder whether even that would satisfy the Secretary of State.

Another aspect of the Bill that is subjected to a strong dose of doublespeak is the winding up of the Training Commission and the new arrangements for ET. If there is one unmistakable sign that the scheme is in deep trouble, it is the fact that the right hon. Gentleman launched it with a big fanfare on 5 September and then, on 30 December, less than four months later, had to relaunch it. With that record of failure, he will no doubt be making taxpayers pay for a third facelift for his pet scheme in the course of the next year. Rather than splashing out £4 million on his glitzy advertising campaign to sell a down-market scheme, the Secretary of State would do better to pay trainees a decent allowance so that they do not have to be tricked into the scheme by clever commercials.

The truth is that companies have given ET the thumbs down in a big way.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to listen. I will give him his answer before he gets up.

Only 18 of the 146 placements that IBM is offering have been filled. Only 22 of Wimpey's 666 placements have been filled. Only 35 of ICI's 121 places have been taken. That means that, in three of our largest companies, only 8 per cent. of the places allotted for ET have been taken up. One would not have thought that the right hon. Gentleman could achieve an even bigger failure than the job training scheme, but he has managed to do so.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is chancing his luck. He must stop misrepresenting the facts. He has talked about truth, but he is misrepresenting the position, which is that no fewer than 106,000 people are under training on ET. The hon. Gentleman has just made a comparison with

JTS. At it height, new JTS had 30,000. In less than four months, employment training has achieved an occupancy of 106,000. Advertising is meant to show that there are places available with some of our leading companies for employing and training unemployed people. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman had the guts to support a programme for training unemployed people.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman gives the whole game away. Of course the advertisements are being made for places with large companies. The problem is that they are not being taken up. The figures that I have quoted are taken directly from evidence that large companies have given.

As to the 106,000, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman has put his foot in it. He is saying that two thirds of the way through the first six-month period for ET, only one third of the 300,000 places have been filled. The problem with his lousy scheme is that it is one third to one half underfilled. Many large companies have refused to take part. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will have the grace to accept that.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way, as I want to get on.

ET does not measure up to the requirements of many large companies. Many know of the contact that McAlpine has with the Tory party. It has pulled out because it does not believe that trainees will come forward to work for the derisory allowance that is to be paid, and it is right to pull out. I hesitate to say, "I told you so," but we have said this all along, although the Secretary of State would not listen. Of those who have joined ET, a good half are only transfers from the old community programme and it is estimated that about 40,000 of those have dropped out altogether rather than transfer and, in the case of single persons, take a 50 per cent. cut in allowances to less than £40 a week.

There are four fundamental flaws in the Government's training programme, but the Bill is concerned only with settling political scores. We had the same rigmarole again from the Secretary of State. First, making the new training and enterprise councils employer-dominated and giving employers a 10:1 majority on the new national training task force shows that the right hon. Gentleman has about as much sense of balance as Eddie Edwards. Perversely, that puts into the driving seat the group that has presided over the biggest rundown in training since the war.

Secondly, there is a crying need for a national skills audit, because only when the gaps and deficiencies in current skill training are systematically exposed can any coherent framework of planning be put in place to remedy them. As a result of these proposals, the Secretary of State is moving in exactly the opposite direction—towards localised fragmentation.

Thirdly, ET is flawed by gross under-funding, as we have always said, and the policy of paring back allowances is now coming home to roost in the miserably low take-up rate. The signs of underhand compulsion to force people on to the scheme are everywhere apparent, whether in restart interview intimidation of which we keep hearing so much, or in the harsher 1940s "actively seeking work" formula in yesterday's Social Security Bill.

Fourthly, under this Secretary of State the whole training structure is built on the fundamental error of splitting jobcentres from training. The only sensible way to plan training is by linking the collection of information on skill requirements with the provision of training leading to a job. The Secretary of State is now foolishly widening the split by setting up the private sector TECs and by the latest moves to privatise the employment service.

On the latter point, this is supposed to be a Government Employment Bill, but it does not mention that this year the Department of Employment is to undergo a transformation more fundamental than any since its creation, and one which will fatally erode its capacity to provide efficient and comprehensive employment services. A year from now, the present Department will no longer exist; there will just be a collection of privatised, hived-off agency organisations.

On 1 April the 41,000 staff of the employment services will be hived off as part of a semi-independent agency under a chief executive not accountable to Parliament. Following the privatisation of training through the training and enterprise councils announced last month, the Department of Employment is effectively removed from public control. It is no coincidence that, at the same time, major cuts will be imposed on staffing, staff grading and services. In the last public expenditure round, the right hon. Gentleman settled for a lower budget for his Department than that recommended by his officials. There can be few precedents for a rat trying to sink a ship before he jumps off it.

What is not in the Bill is more important than what is. What is not in the Bill is the right hon. Gentleman's proposal to close 43 local benefit offices, without the normal consultation procedures. What is not in the Bill is his proposal to relocate job centres and unemployment benefit offices away from the high street to minor, secondary sites. The policy of integration will mark the end of the public employment service that we have known.

What is not in the Bill is the sale of the professional and executive register, which was sold to Maxwell six months ago and is about to close up to 12 of its 50-plus offices. At the time, the right hon. Gentleman hailed that sale as leading to a bright and efficient future, but privatisation has turned out to be the first step towards closure. In common with JTS and ET, whatever he touches simply crumbles in his hands.

What is not in the Bill are the right hon. Gentleman's proposal that the other half of the job clubs that are not privatised should be handed over to the private sector in the spring. That decision is despite a recent internal departmental survey, which showed that public sector job clubs are consistently more efficient at finding work or training for their clients than private sector ones. That has not stopped the right hon. Gentleman laying down a policy that agency job clubs, however badly run, are not to close unless another one opens in the same area. Public sector job clubs, however good they are, may not be increased because of rigid staff ceilings.

What is not in the Bill are the major staffing cuts now being made at senior grade level throughout the enterprise allowance scheme. The number of higher executive officer managers is being halved, from 66 to 35.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way.

This is supposed to be an employment Bill, but the right hon. Gentleman is covetly engaged in the dissolution of public employment services in this country. All his plans

[Mr. Meacher]

are based on the arrogant assumption that unemployment is no longer a problem. Even his own massaged statistics, however, still show unemployment at 2·1 million, which is 60 per cent. above the pre-1979 record high. Independent and reputable estimates, however, put unemployment at more than 2·8 million—nearly two and a half times the previous record high.

At a time when unemployment is still a major political and economic scourge, when training has been criminally neglected by the Government for the past 10 years, when the economy faces a huge struggle ahead with the coming of the single market in 1992, the right hon. Gentleman, instead of strengthening and consolidating his Department to meet the growing challenge, is to run it down, parcel it up and sell it off. Neither the Bill nor the Secretary of State has remotely shown the vision to face the future, and both should be rejected in the Lobby tonight.

5.34 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I listened with care to the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). He mentioned "Alice in Wonderland" and those of us who have listened to him on more than one occasion often feel that he is nearer to the Mad Hatter than any other character in that book. Often his flamboyant language does a disservice to his argument. Frequently, when listening to Opposition spokesmen, one gets the impression that we are not talking about the same measure, the same Minister or, indeed, the same country. The hon. Gentleman's speech was short on any constructive suggestions about the Opposition's intentions or about whether they agree with parts of the Bill.

I am conscious of the importance of ET and I supported restart. I am also aware however, that the Opposition have sought to undermine those measures. We have seen a former Opposition Front Bench spokesman launch a deliberate campaign throughout the country to destroy ET. There have been all sorts of ramifications, and even today the hon. Member for Oldham, West referred to it as a "lousy scheme". His right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, however, went to the TUC conference to persuade it to accept ET. He made a brave and excellent speech in the interests of the long-term unemployed, only to find that he was undermined by Ron Todd and the Transport and the General Workers Union. I admit that lack of training has been a persistent problem, but the Opposition have very little to offer as a solution.

As my right hon. Friend has said, the Bill contains a wide range of amendments to existing legislation. I greatly welcome the fact that the Bill brings us into line with the European equal treatment directive. The demographic changes and falling school rolls present opposite problems from those faced by the Labour Government in 1978. Indeed the future problems are different from those faced between 1979 and 1988. More open employment practices and the trend to employ more women on an equal basis are important.

I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for Oldham, West regarding combining Government policy on employing women. There should be co-ordination between the Departments of Health, Social Security, Employment and the Treasury on the philosophy for properly employing women.

In fairness to my right hon. Friend, he has set the pattern, because, under the ET regulations, a lady going into training can claim up to £50 for child care costs so that she can gain the qualifications that will get her a job. If she gets a job, however, and carries on paying the same amount for child care, a problem arises. That cost is a heavy premium that is not allowed for when obtaining work as a result of the training and the far-sighted allocations given in my right hon. Friend's scheme. We need to review the total package of support which enables a woman to return to work.

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman has made an extremely valuable point. Is he aware that, if that woman went to work for a progressive firm that had a creche, she would have to pay tax on that service because it would be regarded as a perk? Surely that is crazy.

Mr. Lester: It is a perk in the sense that she is being given something that another women working in a similar job would have to pay for. For that reason, it is important to have co-ordination so that there is equal treatment. There is a common desire to assist women back into work, and that desire must be considered objectively.

I do not share the fear expressed by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I do not believe that there will be a rush of lady miners into the industry. I suspect, however, that lady mining engineers will now have a chance. In the oil industry, for example, many young women with high qualifications are employed. It is much to the delight of the men on site when they find that the attractive young woman whom they want to wolf-whistle is a highly qualified engineer who knows all about the oil industry and who can make a great contribution to it.

Mr. Cryer: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that if women were employed in the mines there would have to be accompanying regulations—the Minister gave no indication that such regulations would be introduced—to ensure, for example, that toilets were provided? There are no women's toilets down the mines. The travelling time between the coal face and the bottom of the pit shaft is often an hour, which precludes moving from the coal face to toilet accommodation at the head of the mine. For the Minister blandly to abandon the restrictions on women working in the mines without recognising the additional provision that would have to be made is foolish.

Mr. Lester: I do not foresee many women wanting to work down the mines, but professionally qualified people, including women, will be involved in the mining industry. I had the honour to accompany the Prime Minister down her first coal mine. That was in my constituency, although I am afraid to say that it is closed. She not only travelled the road down to the coal face but, when at the coal face, signed autographs for half an hour. Clearly, ladies can go down mines successfully. We need to ensure that women can play their proper role in the range of technological developments that lie ahead, and I strongly support the remarks that my right hon. Friend made in that context.

Equally, one must be balanced in one's attitude towards changes affecting young people. The anachronisms and complications of the existing law need to be examined and, where necessary, swept away.

Equally, we must be careful to move quickly if we see that freedom being misused unscrupulously. I am sure that

there is common ground in the House that youngsters of 16 to 18 should be in the YTS or higher education. That is the important thrust of Government policy. It follows that, as fewer young people come into the world of work, the more precious they are and the more important it is to ensure—as we have tried to ensure with the development of YTS—that they have the highest base from which to develop their lives, careers, earning capability and success in society.

It is a tragedy that, for reasons which we have been unable to overcome, the figures for 16 to 18-year-olds in higher education and training in Japan and America show that we have a long way to go. The hon. Member for Oldham, West can rest assured that it would not be in anyone's interest to look upon 16 to 18-year-olds as a source of relatively cheap unskilled labour.

I will not comment in detail on the removal of employment protection measures, but I must remark on one measure relating to trade unions and the restriction on the activities of trade union members. We on the Government side of the House must be careful to ensure that, in freeing up the economy and deregulating in the way that has been suggested, we do not become over-bureaucratic in reverse from the point of view of the trade union movement. We must not hedge about with too many restrictions the range of duties for which, for example, trade union officials can officially be paid.

Those with experience of industry know that industries —this applies to all working concerns—are human places where people interface and work together. It is sometimes impossible to put into legislation the various human reactions which are inevitable if a company is to be successful.

During the Christmas recess, I visited various employers in my constituency. I discovered that in many instances there is a shortage of high skills. Part of the way to solve that high skill requirement is, with the good will of the work force, to relax many of the old restrictive practices—to multi-skill people who already have skills and to de-skill some jobs where technology can take over, for example where computer-controlled lathes can do the job.

That can happen in any concern only with the good will of the work force and co-operation of trade union leaders. It is important in all we do to work with the grain, taking the work force with us, so that working practices may be changed. I am not a supporter of macho management reinforced by over-detailed rules and regulations in trying to run any human enterprise. The least one can expect in such a situation is less than full-hearted co-operation and hon. Members who visit industrial concerns will accept that as valid and important.

As for redundancy payments, I welcome the move to ensure that employees do not suffer when firms become insolvent and that rapid moves will be made to ensure that they will be paid. Does my right hon. Friend believe that the removal of rebates will make some employers more cautious before declaring redundancies? One has sensed in the past that there has sometimes been a rush to declare redundancies in what one suspected was a short-term regulator aimed at trying to bring down wage costs quickly, and that subsequently that has been regretted. So, in terms of the thought behind the Bill to improve training and training practice, will the Minister explain how, following this change, he sees the pattern of redundancies?

My principal remarks are concerned with the dissolution of the Training Commission, which has had a short but not particularly merry life. I admit, having been involved in the business of training and industry since the 1960s, that we have been on a treadmill—that, despite the steps forward and all the Government cash that has been put into it since the 1960s, we still face the problem of our chronic inability to achieve a satisfactory training mechanism. Relative to our major competitors, we still have not improved.

The Secretary of State has now resumed responsibility for training. We have witnessed the country going through the full gamut of levies, training boards, the Manpower Services Commission, which we have modified, and now the new system proposed in the White Paper. We now have what is really a system of local delivery based on the German principle. That has had a base of at least 100 years of acceptance in Germany. We have a long way to go before we reach that stage.

What worries me is that the problems and pitfalls remain the same. The first is the whole range of management, management training and management recognition. If we had as high a level of management training and management qualifications as do our competitor countries, management in Britain would be well aware that development and training are an important element in the success of any business at all levels.

I was talking at lunchtime today at a meeting of the all-party management group to representatives of a chemical company which accepted that policy four years ago. They told me that it had worked incredibly well—that from the top of the management structure down through the firm, there was a successful system of recognising ability, of training and of moving people into areas of higher responsibility.

While many companies follow this type of policy successfully, unfortunately many do not. My right hon. Friend and his predecessors have constantly exhorted employers to play a bigger role. I hope that with the local delivery system they will not only be required to play but will be seen to play a more important role in delivering the right level of skills.

The second problem is the freeloader. Such people have been around since the 1960s; they believe not in training but in poaching specialised skilled workers because they think that it is cheaper than involving themselves in proper training. They think it is cheaper to inflate wage demands and to put up costs by poaching skills when they require them. Part of the problem of wages at the moment, particularly in industries in which skills are at a premium, is caused by poaching.

In my area, I know of a company that is short of up to 300 skilled engineering operators. The only way to get them is by trying to recruit in parts of the north-east in which there have been shipyard closures, or to retrain, or to poach. The company in question is successful and has a full order book, but because of its lack of skilled workers it cannot deliver its orders on time and to the required quality. That is a serious problem and it brings me to my third point, about a local scheme——

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the problems which the Government must face, and which they have so far failed to face, is that there are enormous numbers of vacancies in different parts of the country but that it is difficult to get companies to move to areas such

[Mr. Holt]

as mine, however many inducements are offered? That fundamental must be grasped; it will be, perhaps, when we build houses in the right areas so that unskilled people can be trained and moved to them. Equally, the atmosphere in parts of north-east England must be changed. We have shown with Nissan that we can do that. Until those two fundamentals come together, all the fine words will mean nothing.

Mr. Lester: Yes, and there has been comment about the wage settlement that Nissan has given its workers. The 15 per cent. is on top of a much lower base than the general base paid in the midlands. The percentages make it seem like Nissan has broken the guidelines, but the net sums appear different.

Under a local scheme of delivery, who will pay for and provide the high-level costly skills that we are critically short of? The value takes a long time to be added. Of course one can provide basic skills through employment training and the YTS, but long-term engineering and construction skills which are so essential and of which there is a shortage are a different matter. I had a great deal to do with the development of the YOP. I hope that my right hon. Friends will take great care over the continued provision of YTS and ensure that, with the pressure of demand for hands, we do not return to the bad old days, thereby losing the whole purpose of YTS and its two-year development. By the bad old days I mean early recruitment from school, partial training and rejection as soon as young people become capable of earning adult wages.

Those of us who developed the youth training scheme saw it as a permanent measure to assist young people in the transition from school to work and, as the television advertisement shows, to help them find the right future career. It is essential that Conservatives reinforce our commitment to YTS and what it stands for in the context of our future skill needs——

Mr. Nellist: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the true originator of the YTS was Sir John Hoskyns, who is now director general of the Institute of Directors and who wrote the position paper when he worked for the Prime Minister's policy unit? His words were that the aim of YTS was

"to increase the differential between youth and adult wages".

If not £28 or £35 a week, how much does the hon. Gentleman think these young people should be paid?

Mr. Lester: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets his information, but when I was a Minister at the Department of Employment under the then Secretary of State, now Lord Prior, the position papers that we worked on were not prepared by Sir John Hoskyns. They were prepared in exactly the way that I have described. Some who are listening and who worked at the Department at that time will be able to endorse what I am saying. Obviously, the pay during the training period must be continually reviewed, but the hon. Gentleman must recognise that it is not only the cash at the ages of 16 or 17 which is important, but the potential of unskilled lives.

Part of the problem is that young people who were in YOP and did not get into YTS or a job have no skills and little to offer at 25, 26 and 27——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Lester: My penultimate point concerns the importance of national standards and systems of accreditation. I noted with some concern that the work and experience of training boards were dismissed in one sentence in the White Paper. That might not have been meant, but that was how it read. In the course of any changes, we should not throw away the experience and depth of knowledge about the major sectors of manufacturing industry that training boards possess. I am thinking especially of the construction and engineering training boards.

I know that there have been non-statutory successors to some of the training boards and I look forward to reading how they have operated. In this legislation we should give training boards the freedom to develop the marketability of their knowledge and skills commercially. That would be one of the most significant ways in which their talent and inherent knowledge, which have accumulated nationally, could prove themselves. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider that during the passage of the Bill.

Finally, I turn to the function of employment training now given to the training and enterprise councils. I listened carefully to yesterday's debate. I understand the regional variations that have given rise to the suggestion that people must prove that they are actively seeking work. In most of the regions that I visit there is less work than in the south-east. I know from long constituency experience that there is a real bias against people who have been unemployed for a long time—who have slipped through the three-month net. Many people in personnel departments screen them out and do not even interview them.

We should do a survey of the personnel practices of companies, many of which are dismissive of people who are seeking work. The letters that they send out are cold, almost un-Christian. They do not recognise how important it is to a person seeking work to know that he has been properly considered. I am a keen supporter of the employment training initiative and I recognise benefit-plus as being one of the ways of giving security to people who have become disillusioned because they have tried to find work so often. Some of my constituents have come to my surgery with 50 letters of rejection in a carrier bag—I am not joking.

Mr. Holt: They were lucky to receive 50 letters of rejection. Some of my constituents have written 400 letters, of which no more than 80 per cent. were acknowledged.

Mr. Lester: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reinforcing my point. The problem is certainly widespread. My point is—my right hon. Friend has mentioned the over-45s, women and the long-term unemployed—that recruitment must include the long-term unemployed.

When Sainsbury's opened a branch in my constituency which needed 400 people, it was only because the jobcentre negotiated with the store that it was willing to take 10 per cent. of the 400 from the register—40 people. If the jobcentre had not negotiated that agreement, all 400 would have been recruited from among people in work who were not on the register.

I ask my right hon. Friends to consider the scheme put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and myself, which used training vouchers for the long-term unemployed as a way of

motivating them and giving them back a sense of purpose. In addition to retaining the security of social security, they had a training voucher which could be used in a responsible training establishment to gain a qualification. The voucher was theirs and so was the responsibility to use it. We need a transfer of dignity to the person who is seeking training and work rather than a sense of being directed or sent to a suitable place. I am sure that my right hon. Friend, who will want to go down in history as the Minister who at long last got it right, will look again at this imaginative idea.

My last plea is directed to the Opposition, because they have a role and responsibility. If they constantly undermine and denigrate every measure that the Government put forward, it will create uncertainty. Our international position on training and in the skills league is critical and 22 per cent. of companies report skill shortage problems. I have described some of them. We cannot keep pulling up the turnip to see if it is growing. If we are to implement this system we need a period of stability and as much certainty as can ever be guaranteed in this world. Unless we give it a chance to take root and operate we shall not begin to solve this persistent, pervasive national hangover of our inability to train.

6 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): When he presented his Bill, the Minister pretended that it was a long-term measure and looked forward to the state of the labour market over many years. He told us that that was the kind of spacious outlook that we should adopt when considering the Bill. Of course it is right that the House and the country should consider not only the immediate situation but the situation five or ten years hence. For reasons that I shall seek to underline, the Bill is gravely inadequate for that purpose.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) made an appeal for general backing for intelligent measures to deal with this new situation. If that is what is required, the Minister would have been much wiser not to have studded the Bill with measures that he must have known would be highly objectionable in many quarters. Of course the Bill is objectionable to the trade unions and to many other bodies. It is objectionable to many of the youth organisations, to citizens advice bureaux and to the National Council for Civil Liberties. The Bill is riddled with provisions to which those bodies object, and they have made their objections in consultations. However, the Minister swept them away.

It will not be easy for the Secretary of State to say, "Let us have an all-nation and an all-party approach to these problems." We all hope that there has been a major change in employment. Not today but on previous occasions the Minister and the Prime Minister have spoken about the new employment position. They try to conceal the fact that unemployment is still extremely serious, especially in many of the regions. But the Prime Minister has said once or twice—no doubt she got it from the Minister's Department—that the number of employed people is higher today than ever before. That is the Government's claim. It is an interesting claim because it means—and it is only in the last few weeks that they have said it—that the total number of employed people has now got back to just over what it was in 1979. We can all remember that that was the year in which the Conservatives came back to power by saying, "Labour isn't working." That was the year in which there were more people in employment than ever before.

Of course there are many differences between the employment situation in 1979 and the present situation. There are many more people unemployed today, and in calculating the number of people in employment the Minister and the Government count people in part-time jobs as if they were in full-time jobs—and that includes many women.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most significant differences between now and 1979 is that in 1979 the productivity levels of the work force were much lower than they are today?

Mr. Foot: If many people are put out of jobs, productivity can be increased in certain cases. That is what the Government have done. I am saying that, on the Government's own test of the total number of people in employment, they have just got back to the total number of people employed in 1979—that is, if the Government figures are correct. For those of us who remember the contest of that election, this is a matter of some interest.

My hon. Friends on the Front Bench will deal with the question of women much more fully than I can. It is absolutely necessary that over the next five or 10 years the Government, of whichever party, should have a plan to make the fullest possible use of women's labour and women's work. The Bill does not do that in any major field. It merely does what I think is the minimum required by European legislation and tries to put that into our legislation. It has no vision of going any further than that and does not deal with the major question of how we should enlarge the opportunities for women in better paid jobs. The Government do not deal with that, although they could have done so if they had wanted to do so.

An imaginative plan would have foreseen that in the next five or 10 years not only will there be as many women in employment as there are today, but that many more women will be able to get into better paid jobs. One way in which that will have to be done is by protecting the lowest paid workers. That has been the experience in many European countries. Instead of doing that, the Government have done the exact opposite and have attacked lower paid workers, whether they are women or young workers. The Government close their mind to the idea that, if the general standard of wages is to be raised, they must do something about the low paid. Practically all the measures that the Government have taken have injured the position of the low paid rather than improved it.

I come to the major way in which the Government have approached this problem in exactly the wrong spirit using the wrong method. They have said that they will lift some of the so-called restrictions that injure the employment of young workers. In doing so, they have interfered with some of the rights of young workers. There is no point in the Minister pretending that, if he increases the number of hours that young people may work during the week or during the day or detracts from the other protections that they enjoy, it will not affect their health and safety. The Minister is approaching the matter in quite the wrong way.

If the Minister thinks that he is putting forward measures that do not touch on these problems, he should

[Mr. Foot]

listen to the advice from the Health and Safety Commission. It sets out how these regulations should be altered, if they have to be altered:

"the restrictions may be unnecessarily detailed and elaborate, although not an apparent burden on industry".

It was talking about the present restrictions.

"they should not be replaced without some form of control of young persons' hours of work in order to safeguard their welfare and opportunities for education, training, and social development."

That was the advice of the Health and Safety Commission, but that advice has been pushed aside. On other occasions when commenting about the Government's proposals the commission and the Health and Safety Executive, which I am glad to say still exercises some independence in these issues, put their views to the Government.

However, the Government have gone about matters in entirely the wrong way. They could have introduced a great reform in this Bill if they had said what they would do in the next 10, 12 or 15 years to protect and extend the health and safety legislation, the activities of the commission and the effectiveness of its inspectors, not only for young workers, but for workers throughout industry.

As the Minister responsible for introducing the original legislation in 1975, I have some interest in the subject. That legislation was placed on the statute book in times of great difficulty, but we carried it through because we believed that it was essential, particularly in a technological age with new industries growing up in different fields, such as chemicals, to have a new range of health and safety provisions for all workers, including women and young people.

After 10 or 12 years' operation of that Act, it should be reviewed. We should not have to argue about these miserable, squalid, little provisions that will injure the safety protections of many young workers. We should be arguing about how we shall extend the protections for all workers in the hazardous decade that lies ahead of us. If the Minister thinks that there is anything wrong with that, he should read the report of the Health and Safety Commission. I dare say that he has read it, but he has not acted upon it in the Bill.

The headline of the January supplement of the *Employment Gazette*—I am glad to see that its contents have not been suppressed—reads:

"Unsatisfactory year for industrial health and safety".

The Minister has been directly responsible for that. That was the conclusion of the committee that reported to the Department. The article in *Employment Gazette* stated:

"Poor safety management in construction, agriculture and quarrying, as well as several major disasters made 1987-88 'an unsatisfactory year for industrial health and safety'".

Unsatisfactory is putting it mildly; it was the worst year for 10 years.

At the same time, the health and safety people, who know what they are talking about, criticise the Government's figures because they say that they do not tell the full story. If the Minister reads his Department's report, as quoted in *Employment Gazette*, he will see that it claims that the full figures have not been given. We want to have the chance to see those full figures. It has been an unsatisfactory year for industrial health and safety and the full story has not been told to the country.

People are becoming far more interested in these matters than the Government appear to realise, partly because of the appalling tragic disasters that have occurred and partly because of the comments of the apologists for those disasters, such as Sir Jeffrey Sterling, the chairman of P and O, who says that such accidents have nothing to do with him. In fact, they have plenty to do with him and his management because poor safety management, as the HSC says, is partly responsible for these accidents.

The nation's attention is attracted to those terrible tragedies. We must learn from them, although we appear to take a long time to do so. That is another reason for extending health and safety measures. If the Government had had the nerve to introduce such measures, we could have discussed these matters, as they are very topical. It is not only a question of tragedies, crashes and rail disasters. In the construction industry, for example, appalling accidents take place day after day, week after week. More people are killed or maimed in such accidents than in those terrible tragedies.

I was especially interested to see the reference to agriculture in the HSC's report. I remember trying to push such a measure through Parliament in 1975. We introduced a special clause referring to agriculture because we believed that it was essential that agricultural workers should be protected at a time when agriculture was becoming much more mechanised. However, that measure was thrown out of the House of Lords which mobilised about 500 landowners from the backwoods. That was the largest attendance in the House of Lords prior to the attendance in the move to throw out the measure designed to protect blind and deaf people.

As the accident rate in agriculture is now much higher than had ever been estimated, it is all the more necessary for the Government to introduce a comprehensive measure to transform the work possibilities of the HSC. The HSC has been manned from the beginning by people who are devoted to the task. It was set up on the advice of the man who had been the inspector of factories for many years. His life was devoted to the idea of transforming all his knowledge and that of his inspectors into legislation for the future. We increased the number of people covered by health and safety provisions from about 1 million to about 5 million, but that process has not been carried through on the necessary scale. Successive Ministers at the Department have not fought the Treasury to obtain the money to enable the inspectorate to do its job. The independent inspectorate is essential for the HSC to do its job. If the Minister was worth his salt, he would fight for that every day and would bring adequate provisions before the House.

There would have been a very different atmosphere in which to deal with these problems if, instead of having to argue the case about health and safety in the 1990s on the basis in the Bill—for example, whether protections will be withdrawn from young people—we could have learned from our accumulated experience over the past 10 years. We could therefore make the next 10 years the very best years for health and safety welfare legislation and so be ahead of any other country. That is what any decent Government would have done.

I could deal with the other measures, but this is the most far-reaching. The Government do not have the grace to say that what they are doing is wrong, but I plead with them to come forward in the next Session with a full-scale measure for doing what should be done. We cannot prophesy exactly, but no one imagines that these tragic events will suddenly stop. The number of industrial

accidents involving people in dangerous jobs will increase again in the next 10 years. What will the Government do about that? Will they say, "We dealt with that in the special 1989 Bill, which took away the rights of young workers who had been protected. That was the Bill which said that people had to cough up £150 if they claimed that they were being denied the right to go to an industrial tribunal."

This is a squalid little measure. It does not deal with the major questions. I shall not refer to all the matters raised by the hon. Member for Broxtowe, particularly in respect of training, but, if what he said is even one quarter true, with regard to what is happening to the long-term unemployed in this country—how they have to fight to get a chance of a job, have to deal with denial after denial and write letters which receive no reply—this measure will link with the one introduced yesterday in an especially malignant manner. They are linked because they will put pressure on the unemployed. The Secretary of State knows all about this. He described what was happening to some of the long-term unemployed. He should have produced a very different Bill. No Conservative Member will be proud to support this Bill tonight.

I plead with the Government to lift their eyes above this squalid measure. Can we not have a decent, long-term measure to provide genuine training in the decade ahead? Can we not have a long-term measure to ensure that the real risks to health and safety are dealt with, and can we have a Minister who will say to the Treasury that such a measure would not cost the earth? A few hundred million pounds will make all the difference and might stop the tragic accidents. I plead with the Government even now to incorporate some of those measures in this wretched Bill. That might help the House to regain some respect.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It is evident that many hon. Members want to speak. I hope that we will now have a succession of short speeches.

6.21 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I will try to live up to your expectations, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want first to refer to the changes in the law on sexual discrimination to bring it into line with European legislation. I listened with great interest to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and that made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I wonder whether the hon. Member for Oldham, West has read the Bill in full. He seems only to have read the clause which deals with mines. I also wonder whether he understands the relevance of Europe in our deliberations.

We must recognise that dealing with sexual discrimination is as much a matter of changing attitudes as it is a matter of legislation. I used to employ as many women as men in positions of responsibility in management. I have a great admiration of women's competence and ability to do any job that they are asked to do. I recognise that value. A similar experience by businesses will lead to true equality in the employment stakes.

The case is not helped by the bra-less harridans who have been espoused by the Labour party in whatever activity they undertake, be that sexual discrimination, Greenham Common, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament or the campaign for homosexual rights.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Paice: Such behaviour has damaged the true cause of sexual equality to a great extent. The vast majority of women are highly competent and despise the activities which have brought ridicule to the true case for sexual equality.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also referred to women going down mines. I listened very carefully to him to discover whether he would substantiate his original statement which was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or whether the hon. Member would distance himself from it. However, I listened in vain. As is so often the case, the hon. Gentleman is finding it difficult to make up his mind. It is hypocritical for the Labour party, which has espoused the case for sexual equality, to say that we cannot have it where we do not want it, down the mines. It is difficult to understand that.

Ms. Abbott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Paice: I will give way in a minute.

Of course there are physical and practical implications involved in mines, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) explained. However, we must still deal with the question of discrimination and the fact that, if women want to work in mines—there is no question of sending them there—they should have the right to do so.

Ms. Abbott: Perhaps I can enlighten the hon. Member. Sexual equality involves raising standards, not lowering them. We would not enhance the status of children if we sent them down mines, and similarly we will not enhance women's status if we did that. The organisations which the hon. Gentleman described as "bra-less harridans", such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, the National Council for Civil Liberties and the professional women's organisations which have studied sexual equality for many years, are concerned with raising standards, wages and opportunities for women. They do not want to bring back the conditions of the 19th century.

Mr. Paice: That intervention underlines the lack of understanding. We are not talking about lowering standards. We are talking about increasing opportunities. No one has said anything about sending anyone anywhere. There is no question of children going down the mines as the hon. Lady suggested. I suspect that the reality is a desire to maintain the image of macho man the miner instead of appealing for genuine opportunities for women.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) expressed a desire to see a long-term plan for training. I endorse that, and the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester): that is the right approach. The demise of the Training Commission was inevitable following the disastrous decision at the TUC conference. However, it would be wrong not to pay tribute to the work of the Training Commission and the Manpower Services Commission. The Training Commission did much to pioneer and improve training programmes, specifically with the youth training scheme. It also developed a range of techniques for assessment and monitoring. I am sure

[Mr. Paice]

that many of the staff from the Training Commission will continue that work under the guise of the Training Agency or will be seconded to the training and enterprise councils.

Despite all our efforts across a whole range of activities to stimulate training, industry is still not responding fully. We must understand that there is a great need to encourage employers to control and fund training to a much greater extent. I am sure that TECs will play a major role in that. However, we must ensure that the TECs are truly representative of the businesses in the areas that they serve. I represent a large rural constituency with a massive range of businesses including agriculture, high technology and medical research. It is essential that the TECs represent the full range and do not become the preserve of a small clique.

I am satisfied with the White Paper's proposal that training contracts should be more based on payment by results in terms of jobs gained and skills gained. That is a useful step forward which I am sure was gleaned by my right hon Friend the Secretary of State for Employment during his visit to the United States of America last year.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Broxstowe, I am concerned about the future of the youth training scheme and specifically about Government funding for the scheme. A few years ago research showed that business funding for training in the best cases represented 4 per cent. of the payroll. The average was about 2 per cent., and that causes great anxiety because many businesses were spending little or nothing on training.

The Government set out to encourage businesses to spend more on training and that has been happening through YTS as grants have been held at cash levels. However, I believe that it would be wrong for the Government to consider its long-term policy to be a withdrawal of funding of the YTS. YTS must remain a broad national foundation for 16 to 18-year-olds on which employers can build future training and on which the employee can build career changes by obtaining the necessary training.

If the Government pull out of funding the YTS, there is a risk that its framework will disappear and the scheme will become too narrow for the long-term benefit of the people and businesses that it serves. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give me some hope that the Government do not intend ultimately fully to pull out of YTS funding.

I have one further regret to express. It concerns an omission from the Bill. I hope that, even at this stage, my right hon. Friend will rectify it by an amendment at a later stage. I refer to the matter of the pre-entry closed shop. Since 1979, the Government have, by a series of staged changes in employment legislation, shifted the balance of power away from the organisation and to the individual. That is the correct and sensible way to progress and it is a change that I have consistently supported. However, we are left with one great anachronism in the form of the pre-entry closed shop. If we are honest, we may suspect that that is because many employers like it. However, that does not make it right, and the House should recognise that the pre-entry closed shop is wrong and is an infringement of the individual's rights.

I make my case by citing one example. The Select Committee on Employment is currently investigating employment prospects for older workers. One of the organisations from which the Select Committee took both written and oral evidence was Tesco. That company has consciously set out to employ people aged over 50, which is entirely admirable and something that the House will respect. There are three Tesco superstores in my constituency and a fourth just over the boundary. Therefore, Tesco constitutes a major employer in the area.

One of my constituents, in his fifties and without work, decided to take advantage of Tesco's enlightened approach and applied for a job. Right hon. and hon. Members can imagine his surprise when he found that the company's job application form included, as an integral part, an application form also for membership of USDAW. More importantly, it incorporated the statement:

"It is a condition of your employment that you become and remain a member of the union."

There may be good and sound reasons why Tesco and other organisations want their employees to join a union. Certainly it is entirely sensible of people to want union membership so that they may benefit from the services and opportunities that it provides. For employers, it means convenience and greater tidiness. However, my constituent simply wanted a job. As a man in his fifties, he did not want to be told that he was obliged to join a trade union. When he telephoned ACAS, he was advised to join USDAW but, having got the job, then to resign, and that if Tesco dismissed him for that reason he should fight the company through the courts. Why on earth should my constituent be compelled to take such action? Needless to say, he declined ACAS's suggestion and is still looking for a job. It is for that reason that he asked me not to divulge his identity, but I have all the facts of the case.

Opposition Members have, rightly, expressed concern —as have my right hon. and hon. Friends—about the difficulties faced by the older person seeking employment. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe spoke of the long-term unemployed and of the increasing difficulties resulting from employers' attitudes towards them. I doubt whether even the hon. Member for Oldham, West, with his inventive rhetoric, will be able to justify to my constituent why he should be compelled to join a trade union in order to be given a job. Joining a trade union is not wrong, but making union membership compulsory in order to get a job is wrong. Where are the employee's rights in that?

This afternoon we have heard much said about the rights of the employee, but where are his rights when he is compelled to apply for trade union membership before he can be considered for a job? I hope that even at this stage my right hon. Friend will consider adding to the Bill the necessary clauses to outlaw a system that destroys a fundamental human right. It is a right that we on the Government Benches have espoused for the past 10 years —the right of choice. I support the Bill but I hope that it will be amended in the way that I have suggested.

6.35 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in clearly spelling out the real dangers posed to young people not only by the implementation of clause 8 in what the Government describe as deregulation—but which most of us describe as the removal of decent protections—but linking it with the clause removing the

training commission and establishing the training and enterprise councils and the agency arrangements, which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West described in terms of the lack of responsibility and accountability resting with the Secretary of State and, subsequently, with the House.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) would do better to turn his mind to the real dangers that already confront 16 and 17-year-olds, which will be magnified with the introduction of the Bill, rather than debating whether people should have the rightful protection of a trade union to ensure that their interests are safeguarded and that employers carry out their responsibilities dutifully.

I illustrate that point with the case of Derek Cain, who was killed while participating in a youth opportunity scheme on 20 December 1982. His case was pursued by his father, Richard, who is one of my constituents, with the help of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) and other hon. Friends representing Sheffield constituencies, as well as by my predecessor, Miss Joan Maynard. They gave every possible assistance to a man who displayed remarkable tenacity against the establishment and the indifference of the Department of Employment and the former Manpower Services Commission. Mr. Richard Cain used the whole of his redundancy pay to pursue the matter for six years, despite being advised that a case against a Government Department and the Manpower Services Commission would never be successful. Yet he was indeed successful, and in the High Court on 21 December 1988 the Department of Employment was found responsible in lieu of the MSC and the Training Commission.

That case showed that existing arrangements and procedures for protecting young people are already inadequate. Today's statements by the Secretary of State for Employment are not only woefully inadequate but a negation of his responsibility in suggesting that existing health and safety regulations, together with the proposals outlined in clause 8, are sufficient to protect 16 and 17-year-olds from the fate that befell Derek Cain.

I shall explain why. Derek Cain's case showed that Manpower Services Commission staff were not trained to understand the Factories Act 1961 and the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. They did not comprehend either that a factory had to be registered, or the existing regulations concerning dangerous machinery to which the Secretary of State referred when he told the House today that they would not be affected by the Bill. The company itself, which was non-unionised, was in breach of most of what we would describe as basic safety requirements.

The court found that the placement officer had not checked and did not know that the firm should be registered, and that the officer above him responsible for safety in the Manpower Services Commission had not visited the premises, but had checked on the phone that the management believed that the dangerous machinery in the paper mill conformed adequately with safety requirements for a youth opportunities placement.

What has really angered Mr. Cain, and should anger every Member of Parliament—and what should not only direct the Secretary of State's attention to removing clause 8, a provision which would increase the dangers to young people, but encourage him to bring forward genuine safety requirements for 16 and 17-year-olds—is this. From that day onwards, despite the indifference shown to Mr. Cain's draconian efforts to draw public attention to what had happened, he has been vindicated by the tragic fact—spelt out already today—that the dangers for those on the youth training scheme have more than doubled. But when the scheme was introduced, Ministers said in the House that it would remove the dangers illustrated by the death of Derek Cain.

Incidentally, Derek Cain lay undiscovered for two hours after his accident with a baling machine. When the case was heard in the coroner's court, it was discovered that his father had been denied death benefit because Derek had not been an employee, and denied death grant. That was later found to be a further error by departmental civil servants.

It is not the individuals who are culpable—it is a system that puts deregulation and profit before the protection of young people who cannot protect themselves. They cannot do what a representative of the Institute of Directors suggested earlier this week in a BBC broadcast and get themselves into another job if they consider themselves at risk. If they leave their jobs they will be disqualified from receiving benefit; if they are sacked, under the Bill they will no longer be told why they were sacked, and will lose both their benefit and their credibility when seeking other employment. But they have no redress other than the protection of the courts, and—as was proved by Mr. Cain's six years of dedicated struggle with no one to help him and faced with the indifference of the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission—it is a long and thankless task. Only someone with the tenacity of a Richard Cain would have followed it through.

That is why we should not only reject the Bill as it is drafted, but demand from the Secretary of State a statement on how he sees the protection that he described earlier being applied—not only to people like Derek Cain but to the thousands of young people who are currently at risk from what Winston Churchill described in 1909 as the irresponsibility of the bad employer that could be matched only by the irresponsibility of the worst. That is the message that we should put across tonight.

Mr. Nellist: Shortly after the tragic death of Derek Cain, I worked closely in the House with his father Richard to produce a private Member's Bill putting forward his suggestions that the MSC should become more accountable for the health and safety of young people on the youth training scheme. Is not another factor in the truths that my hon. Friend has spoken tonight that the tragic deaths of nearly 50 other youngsters since Derek's death are testimony that the Department ignored all that Richard said?

Mr. Blunkett: Regrettably, my hon. Friend is right. The increase of over 100 per cent. in fatal and serious injuries is a tragic testament to that. Procedures are needed for which we as elected Members of Parliament are accountable, so that some redress is available outside the expensive and difficult court system—before and not after the tragic deaths of youngsters like Derek Cain. If such procedures are to come about, the Secretary of State must take on board both the recommendations drawn up after Derek's death and the suggestions made in the High Court judgment.

There ought to be proper liaison between the careers departments and the new training and enterprise councils.

[Mr. Blunkett]

There ought to be independent monitoring, training for staff in basic safety requirements and protection for youngsters—the sons and daughters of all of us—who would expect us, as responsible Members of Parliament accountable to those whom we represent, to have the honesty to admit that employers will not do the job for us and that young people cannot do it on their own. This is our responsibility. If the Secretary of State ducks it he will, tragically, be responsible for further incidents in the future.

6.45 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate, as I served on Standing Committees considering two employment measures in this and the last Parliament and fully supported both. The vast majority in the country also supported them—as, it should be noted, did the majority of trade union members. I believe that this Bill, when enacted, will likewise command widespread support across the political spectrum, in industry and in the trade unions.

The speech by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was a total disappointment: it was negative and patronising to the young people of this country. So, too, I regret to say, was the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). Conservative Members need no lectures from a former Employment Secretary whose tenure of office was such an unmitigated disaster.

Mr. Wareing: The Conservatives are the party of unemployment.

Mr. Evennett: I always come to employment debates with some optimism, hoping that there will be constructive discussion from both sides of the House, but I am always disappointed and amazed at the over-emotional reactions from the Opposition. They seem to glory in unemployment, and they always try to ignore the constructive side and go for the negative.

Mr. Janman: I heard an Opposition Member say that this was the party of unemployment. Is my hon. Friend aware that all Labour Governments since the war have left office with unemployment higher than when they came in?

Mr. Evennett: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I should have thought that in a debate on a minor Bill it would have been constructive to look to the future rather than giving a history lesson on the past—particularly when the Opposition's record in office was so bad.

In 1979, so much was wrong with the laws governing employment and industrial relations that much reform was required. Over the past decade we have seen piecemeal reforms in the areas where they were necessary. I welcome the Government's commitment to continuing that reform and to updating our employment laws, not in a doctrinaire way but practically and pragmatically. As society changes, the law must be reformed to meet or reflect that change; that is as true in employment as in every other service. We have an obligation to reform the law so that unnecessary and outmoded provisions are removed, enterprise is able to flourish and the maximum unhindered opportunity is given to individuals.

In this day and age it cannot be right that our employment laws allow discrimination against women. In the last 20 years the law has rightly been changed. It requires that generally there should be equality of treatment and opportunity for the sexes, apart from specific and necessary safeguards of the kind that one would expect in a decent and civilised society.

Against such a background, I fully support the provisions in the Bill which aim to extend the general principles contained in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 so that discriminatory provisions that have no valid purpose are overridden. That must be a logical and reasonable reform. It recognises the fact that in modern society women are not helpless victims in a Victorian melodrama, as certain Opposition Members would have us believe, and in need of patronising over-protection. It recognises that they are individuals capable of making rational choices and decisions for themselves. We believe that they should be given more opportunities to make decisions for themselves.

I am a firm believer in equal opportunities. It is not often that I welcome what the EEC Commission does. We have had many late-night debates on its deliberations. However, on this occasion I believe that the Commission's equal treatment directive is right. To widen freedom of choice for the individual is an obvious way in which to promote equal opportunities. By so doing, the House will do much more for equal opportunities than merely empty gestures. The Bill is practical and effective.

I mentioned earlier that it is very easy to be over-patronising towards the young. The Opposition Front Bench and some Opposition Back Benchers have been almost unbelievably so. The young must not be treated in that way. They represent our nation's future. They want and expect both opportunities and choice. They do not want to be smothered by outdated regulations and restrictions. There is a new spirit among the young people of this country. It has been fostered and encouraged by Government action during the past few years. Young people want to take up opportunities and challenges and go forward, and we must allow them to do so.

By their education and training reforms, the Government have done a great deal to ensure that young people are better equipped to deal with life and work in the adult world. All hon. Members listened with considerable distress and concern to the description by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) of that tragic case six years ago. We can always cite individual tragic cases and make them into something far more important, but we cannot legislate for the future of all our young people just because of one very tragic incident.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Gentleman says that it is just one case, but he must have heard the intervention by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) who said that since that tragic case there have been reports of 50 deaths on youth training schemes. Do not such tragic deaths require our serious attention?

Mr. Evennett: The hon. Gentleman misrepresents me. Of course every tragedy of this nature deserves serious consideration, but the Bill is attempting to provide young people with more opportunities. That is what they want and that is what they need. Furthermore, that is what the Bill will provide.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that, despite a great deal of work by a number of organisations that have

looked into accident levels on youth training schemes, there is no evidence that, however bad or good those levels may be, they are any worse than the accident levels that apply to the same age group who are in full employment? It is not, therefore, something that should be thrown at the door of YTS.

Mr. Evennett: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. He is right to back up his assertions, as he always does, with his considerable experience.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evennett: I should prefer to finish this point and then give way.

The reforms must be viewed in conjunction with the Government's major education reforms and the expansion of training opportunities as a comprehensive widening of freedom of choice for the young. Legislation that restricts the working hours and conditions of young people obviously had a very big part to play when the school-leaving age was lower, when there was greater dependence on heavy manual labour and when the young were less well prepared to deal with life in the adult world than they are today. The average 16-year-old today is far more mature than his or her predecessors ever were. I grew up in the 1960s. The 16-year-old today is far more mature than 16-year-olds in the 1960s. At that time the legislation had a clear and necessary role to play in preventing exploitation, but times have changed. We have to look to the future as well as to the present. The law must be reformed in line with those changes.

Modern working conditions in most sectors are far better. Today's young people are far more capable of standing on their own feet, developing their talents and taking the opportunities that are given to them. We must allow them to do that.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Opposition wanted the legislation to be based on one case. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) knows, I was in from the beginning on the case of Derek Cain. As soon as that tragedy occurred and was publicised, numerous cases from all over Britain were drawn to Mr. Cain's attention. They all related to young people who had been killed. The hon. Gentleman has just said that, at the age of 16, young people can stand better on their own feet than they could a short time ago. By that he implied that working practices are safer. However, under the youth training scheme, more and more cases are coming to light of young people being killed. It is not true that young people can stand better on their own feet as a result of this Government's measures. They are in great danger from this Government.

Mr. Evennett: The hon. Gentleman is fundamentally wrong. Modern training and education means that today the 16-year-old is better equipped to deal with life than he has ever been. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said only a few minutes ago that the facts do not bear out that assertion.

Small businesses have an important role to play in our economy. They have proved to be the way forward in many sectors of industry and commerce. Small businesses are efficient, dynamic enterprises that can respond rapidly to market changes. It is that flexibility of operation which has made many small businesses extremely successful and which, in turn, has done a great deal for employment opportunities.

Many enterprises in my constituency are small businesses and I often hear loud complaints from them about red tape and the need to remove unnecessary administrative burdens. In addition to the shortage of skilled staff and school leavers, administrative burdens are the other major bugbear of the small business. For large industrial companies, there is an obvious need for clearly understood disciplinary procedures to be applied. By their very nature, large companies tend to be impersonal. A formal disciplinary procedure often provides the only effective machinery for resolving the problems that relate to an individual's work performance.

For a small employer, the situation is completely different. The existence of such a procedure is unlikely to be of benefit either to employer or to employee. We must not forget that small businesses are exactly that—they are small. The employer is often one person who combines the role of line manager and personnel officer and who also, more importantly, knows each employee individually. Formal rules serve little purpose because problems are invariably resolved informally. For small employers, the existence of a formal disciplinary procedure adds nothing, apart from additional administrative work and possibly increased solicitors' bills.

I am not for one moment suggesting that all small business men are paragons of virtue, but such employers are unlikely to change their attitudes merely because of the existence of a formal disciplinary procedure. Small business men who treat their staff badly are subject to a far more effective system of control—market forces. A bad employer soon finds that his reputation means that he cannot recruit or retain high calibre staff. In small firms with under 20 employees, the loss of a few key personnel will often have a profound effect on profitability. In such circumstances, the existence of a formal disciplinary procedure has no useful place. For the majority of small business men who operate fairly and decently, it is another bureaucratic hurdle that is placed in their way. There are other areas that we would like the Bill to cover but Conservative Members believe that this is another step towards improving employment opportunities in this country and bringing the law up to date.

We should welcome and support the Bill and its modest reforms, but we also need to look towards further reforms in employment law. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note of that because we have already heard that there are several areas where Conservative Members would like to see further legislation in the next Session—for instance, on the abolition of the national dock labour scheme and the pre-entry closed shop. We should also be looking at providing a statutory framework for no-strike agreements, particularly for those employed in vital services. No doubt those are matters that my right hon. and hon. Friends will bear in mind in the next Session.

The deregulatory measures in the Bill, though minor, will improve employment conditions in this country. Surely, we all want more employment, a better work force and training and more opportunities for workers to enable them to maximise their potential. Although the Bill goes a long way towards achieving that, we should look for more radical measures from the Government in the next Session.

7.1 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, whilst it makes welcome provision for the ending of sexual discrimination in employment matters and seeks to remove anomalous regulations with regard to the employment of young people, nevertheless fails to provide for adequate protection for employed young people, seriously erodes the rights of individuals in employment, and contains no adequate measures designed to secure employment for the long term unemployed or the training of the workforce in the skills required by industry to meet the industrial challenges of the 1990s and beyond."

When he introduced the Bill, the Secretary of State tried to give the impression that it was part of a grand design to meet the demographic challenges of the 1990s and to embark on a course of deregulation. I confess that when I first read the Bill it reminded me of nothing more than —as Scottish Members will recognise—a Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. It seems to be a basket of measures with no one particular theme. Some of the provisions are not too bad. Some are neutral. For example, there is no comment on the storage of celluloid film. Some are downright bad. Most of the Opposition's comments relate to the bad themes.

The provisions in the Bill that are designed to end some discriminatory practices against women have proved controversial. We welcome those, not least those which assimilate redundancy rights for males and females. We also welcome those which give more equal access to certain categories of jobs.

It is strange that in this day and age the many Labour Members who have spoken have needed to conjure up the ogre of the 19th century to voice opposition to this measure. That reveals a narrow approach that does not strike a chord of sympathy with those women whose employment prospects and opportunities have to date been frustrated by legislation.

A constituent's mother wrote to me last year about her daughter who was a second-year mining engineer undergraduate at Newcastle university. She said:

"This coming summer vacation she is expected to have employment in the industry, since this work will be considered next year as part of her final examination. Needless to say she is finding it difficult to achieve this . . .

I am sure she realised that when she decided to do mining engineering she would have to break into what was a 'male' stronghold. However with hard work and a fair chance she felt she would be able to achieve her ambition . . .

The University of Newcastle has indicated its progressive attitudes by opening the department to young women. It's about time the country as a whole accepted the fact that young women are going to want to work in industries that have previously been barred to them, and whilst it will take some time to break down social barriers, there is no place in modern society for legal constraints."

She is the type of person engaged in mining engineering whom this provision is intended to help and we welcome that.

We acknowledge that there are provisions in the Bill that seek to rationalise the working hours of young people and remove some anomalies. That is not something that I criticise. I imagine that many young people would be surprised to learn about some of the anomalies that exist and I wonder how many of them are actually policed. The points that have been made about the need to maintain some protection for young people in employment are however, important.

I resented the implication of the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evenett) that, in taking up this issue, the Opposition were patronising young people. The number of accidents involving young people in employment speaks for itself and to state those facts is not patronising. Mention has been made of the number of fatalities and serious accidents involving people on youth training schemes. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) thought that he was coming to the aid of his hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford when he said that the level of accidents was just as high for young people in other forms of employment. That simply underlines the point. If there is an increased likelihood of young people being involved in accidents in employment, and if they are likely to be working longer hours—inevitably, the longer one works the less vigilant and alert one becomes—some protective provisions should be put in place. The absence of such provisions in the Bill to accompany the removal of many anomalies is a serious omission.

Mr. Batiste: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a distinction between the appropriate legislative framework around which safety requirements should be established—that should be the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974—and the enforcement of that legislative framework? If safety legislation is too varied, too self-contradictory and too restrictive, one defeats one's objectives.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): There are not enough inspectors.

Mr. Wallace: That is an important point. The number of inspectors does not need to be addressed by legislation but through resources. However, that has not been done. As the CBI recognised in the quotation given by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) in a measure that opens up the possibility of exploitation by unscrupulous employers, some additional protective measures are required.

Many Conservative Members have said that the Bill is intended to support small businesses. However, the removal of the 35 per cent. rebate for redundancies by companies with fewer than 10 employees is regretted by many small businesses. It has been opposed by the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses. The Government said that £9 million will be saved by that measure, and no doubt that means a cost of £9 million for the small business sector. When small businesses are thinking of closing down or are passed on when someone reaches retirement age, the removal of that rebate could hamper the efforts that are sometimes made to ensure continuity of employment rights.

I shall now deal with the clauses concerning individual employee rights. This Administration seem to dwell on myths. They act in the name of deregulation and easing the burden on small businesses, but that is often not supported by hard facts. The hon. Member for Oldham, West mentioned the Department's own document entitled "Unfair Dismissal: Law and Employment Practice in the 1980s" which says that there was

"little sign that employment protection legislation was inhibiting industrial recovery or contributing to the high level of unemployment by discouraging employers from taking on new people."

In October 1988 the British Institute of Management found, from a sample of its 70,000 members, that only 11

per cent. thought that there was too much employment protection legislation and 78 per cent. thought that the current level was about right. One strongly suspects that there are many other more important factors which determine the possibilities open to small businesses and to enable them to expand.

Clause 11 disentitles an employee from receiving a statement of reasons for dismissal if he or she has been employed for under two years. As the law stands, he or she cannot make any claim for unfair dismissal without having been employed for two years. Therefore, there is no perceived advantage in terms of labour flexibility if this measure is enacted. However, it would prejudice the rights of that individual. It may prejudice the right to claim benefit if there is no statement of the reasons why someone is without work. It may prejudice the right or ability to seek other employment if there is no reference or no apparent reason why the previous employment was ended.

A product of the Government's approach, which sees industry as a battlefield with one side gaining rights at the expense of the other, is the lack of comprehension that employment protection measures can be conducive to good industrial relations. Clause 9, which removes the requirement for particulars of disciplinary procedures to be given when there are fewer than 20 employees, is a good example of that. The British Institute of Management, in a letter which was circulated to all hon. Members, states that it is good management practice that employees should have a clear idea of where they stand, and makes the point that it is more important in small businesses where there is a close personal link between employers and employees than it is in larger businesses. It argues that, in small businesses, verbal communication does not carry the same weight as written instruction. It is important that employees know where they stand, and the Government have advanced no good reason for such a change.

One of the most mean-minded provisions of the Bill relates to industrial tribunals. When the Government first proposed the £25 fee, it met blanket opposition and there was scarcely a good word to be found for it anywhere.

Mr. Foot: Until they made it £150.

Mr. Wallace: But when the Bill is brought forward, the Government made it £150, as the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) says. That seems to be the compromise. However, it is fair to say that it is not a compulsory levy for all; it is at the discretion of the chairman at a pre-tribunal hearing.

The Bill gives the Secretary of State power to make very wide regulations. Obviously that will have to be examined in detail in Committee. Nothing has been said in the debate to suggest that a vast number of frivolous cases are clogging up the industrial tribunal system, yet the Bill contains a threat of a fiscal barrier to justice. When many of us believe that the legal aid system should be extended to people who wish to take cases to industrial tribunals, the Bill provides a new imposition.

There is an analogy with what used to happen in Scotland in regard to criminal legal aid for summary cases. At that time, one had to apply to the sheriff who had to be satisfied that the financial qualifications of a person being prosecuted for a crime entitled him to legal aid and that it was in the interests of justice that he receive legal aid. That met widespread disapproval, particularly in smaller areas where the sheriff who was to judge the case was making a preliminary decision as to whether it was in the interests of justice that someone should receive legal aid. To their credit, this Government removed that provision because they were aware of the anomaly that could arise. We are reintroducing that approach in a different form.

The Bill attacks individual employment rights. That is totally out of step with our European partners. We understand that it was very much to the Prime Minister's chagrin that Jacques Delors told the TUC in September that 1992 probably meant great advances for social rights and for the rights for people in employment. One cannot believe that when we seek harmonisation in employment practices our European partners will want to level down to us. We shall be looking to level up to them with greater entitlements for employees.

Mr. Janman: The hon. Gentleman has raised a very important point by taking the deregulation of our labour market in a European context. Does he not agree that the more we liberalise our labour market the more investment we shall attract from the rest of Europe, from the Pacific area and from across the Atlantic, and our partners in the European Community will realise that deregulation is the way to go and will follow our lead?

Mr. Wallace: I do not accept that that will be the pattern of events. Significant benefits are enjoyed with very constructive industrial relations in places such as West Germany, which, as the Prime Minister recognised yesterday, has a very stable, thriving economy. I do not think that they need to take lessons from us. We need to take lessons from them in social service provisions such as creches and nursery facilities.

Mr. Janman *rose*——

Mr. Wallace: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already. I must try to make progress.

The Bill also abolishes the Training Commission. I do not wish to dwell on the history that led to that, except that it was the view of my right hon. and hon. Friends that, although the employment training scheme was not satisfactory, it was the only one we had, so it was better to try to make it work than to try to defeat its objects. The Government are now abolishing the Training Commission and intend to replace it with training and enterprise councils, going back almost 20 years by putting the burden on industry. They are taking a great gamble, because over the years industry has not been particularly conspicuous for what it has done to improve training.

The Scottish Office White Paper, "Scottish Enterprise" frankly admits:

> "Efforts to date to persuade the private sector to take great interest in and responsibility for training have had disappointing results. Far too many firms take little interest in assessing and training for their own future needs, assuming that supply will always be there to meet demand."

Therefore, the Government are taking a great risk in putting the responsibility back into the private sector. One is entitled to be sceptical. So many employers are afraid to spend money on training employees in case they are poached by another firm. In a recession, training is regularly one of the first things to go. A revolution in attitude is needed and we do not have much time.

Many figures have been produced about skill shortages and the need to train people, particularly in skills requiring a relatively high level of educational attainment. Nothing in the Bill seems to foster that, or to try to amend the fact

[Mr. Wallace]

that only 13 per cent. of young people between 16 and 18 go into full-time education in Britain, while 58 per cent. of their counterparts in France do. Only by tackling that educational aspect will we start to make some progress in filling the skill shortages that undoubtedly exist.

Finally, nothing in the Bill gives any hope to the long-term unemployed. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) made the point eloquently, and the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) in his intervention underlined the fact that many letters are not even answered. Many people try to dismiss the long-term unemployed by suggesting that they are workshy or lack motivation. Research undertaken by the Campaign for Work showed that employers discriminate against those who have been unemployed for one, two, three, four or more years, not in any wicked or malicious way but they receive applications and say, "This person has not had a job for the past two years so there must be something wrong with him." But research has shown that when they are given a chance to return to employment their motivation returns very quickly.

It would have been a much happier situation if tonight we had been debating a Bill which contained proposals to guarantee employment for those who had been unemployed for more than two years as is done in Sweden. The Government promised to find a training place on the YTS for all youngsters leaving school who had not found employment. Some of us are sceptical as to the extent to which they have achieved that but to give the Government credit, they set themselves a target and made efforts to achieve it. Something similar for the long-term unemployed would be a very welcome measure. There is nothing in the Bill to give them that hope. Therefore, my right hon. and hon. Friends cannot support the Bill tonight.

7.17 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I welcome the Bill as yet another step towards developing the labour market in Britain and providing job opportunities for working people. I take issue with the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) in respect of the long-term unemployed. If he were to look at recent figures, he would see that unemployment is dropping much faster in that category than it is in general. The employment training schemes that are now being introduced will only accentuate that process.

During the past few years, there has been a major expansion of employment in Britain, and there are well over 1 million new jobs in the economy. As opinion poll after opinion poll shows, unemployment is dropping as a priority for British people. Obviously it is dropping as a priority for Labour Members, as shown by their attendance this evening.

In my constituency of Gravesham, in Kent, which was an unemployment black spot, unemployment is now half what it was at the peak of unemployment and it is falling fast. The growing problem in Gravesham is not unemployment but skill and labour shortages. If we are to sustain the exceptional level of growth in our economy that we have achieved, it is vital that the people coming into the labour market should be fully trained. The Government deserve to be congratulated on the success of the youth training scheme. In my constituency, about 80 per cent. of young people leaving the YTS are obtaining jobs. Many are now on employment training.

The Bill represents a milestone, in that it records the passing of the old Manpower Services Commission in its transitional guise as the Training Commission. I was here at the beginning of the debate and heard the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who has been absent for most of the debate, enjoying mocking the dear departed. He failed to mention that the dear departed MSC was stabbed in the back by the Trades Union Congress.

In the hour in which the TUC could have achieved something, it betrayed the young unemployed by saying that it would not work with the employment training scheme and the YTS. Those schemes represented hope and opportunity for the young unemployed and the TUC was found lacking. That proved the growing irrelevance of the TUC to the economic life of this nation.

Those of us who are interested in education have been concerned in recent years about the problems of falling rolls. There has been a sharp drop in the number of young people in schools, which reflects the drop in the birth rate about 20 years ago. That trough in the birth rate is now working its way through the labour market and will present us with considerable problems unless certain steps are taken now. That is one reason why I welcome the measures in the Bill: it seeks to sweep away many of the restrictions on the employment of young people.

Young people—and other hon. Members—would resent the suggestion that the measures will increase the danger for young people. We have heard clearly this afternoon from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that safety measures are remaining in place in industry and that there are no changes in working protection for youngsters under the age of 16. An attempt to keep the limitations on young people's work is patronising in the extreme. The younger generation today is far more capable than earlier generations and resents the patronising restrictions.

I am equally encouraged by the way in which the Bill will sweep away a number of restrictions on women. I was amazed to hear the snobbery of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) when she suggested that being a miner was to be of a lower status. It is a shame that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is not here to put her in her place on that subject.

The Bill will continue the process of freeing the labour market, but there is one glaring omission. The Bill requires a clause to bring about the abolition of the national dock labour scheme, including within it compensation for the few remaining registered dockers. The national dock labour scheme represents the last of the great restrictive practices so dear to the heart of the departed Labour party. Those of us who represent port areas are fed up with the damage that the scheme is doing to employment prospects there.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My hon. Friend spoke of the few remaining registered dockers. One of the more alarming features of the scheme is that a considerable number of dockers remain registered. What is even more alarming is that a growing percentage of them are under 25.

Mr. Arnold: I am concerned about the few remaining dockers. That is best exemplified by remembering that, at the end of the war, there were 73,000 registered dockers, whereas there are fewer than 10,000 today. Although a few new dockers are coming in at the bottom, the great majority of dockers are, on average, 43 years of age or more. The national dock labour scheme is withering on the vine as dockers die or retire, but so are the employment prospects in traditional dock areas, which are mainly in the best places in this country for the unloading of goods and their transport. A recent study shows that there would be 50,000 extra jobs in the registered dock areas without the hampering constraints of this scheme.

I wonder why the Government have not put a clause in the Bill on that. It is fair to say that the Government may be concerned about the possibility of a national dock strike and the damage that that would do to our economy. We can perhaps look forward with some relief to the Lord Cardigans of the Transport and General Workers Union, who are working hard at the moment, not to make the docks a success, but to bring about a national dock strike. If the union is successful and brings about a dock strike, the Government's best response would be to table a clause further to improve the labour market by getting rid of the national dock labour scheme.

I support the Bill, in particular the way in which it seeks to get rid of the restrictions on young people and women in the workplace. I hope that our traditional dock areas will equally be set free.

7.27 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Bill, in addition to dealing with training, has a hotch-potch of mean, nasty, half-baked ideas and prejudices. It seeks to strip away all protection for young people on the hours that they can work. As a result, 16-year-olds could be forced to work ten-and-a-half-hour days and more than 48 hours a week, start before 7 am or finish after 8 pm and work night shifts. But they will do all that without getting the adult wage. That is supposed to be liberating the young. This return to Victorian working conditions for a weak and vulnerable section of the work force is the new Government recipe for rescuing the economy. None of this reactionary nonsense was in the Government's election manifesto.

The Bill makes it easier for employers to dismiss workers. In small firms, employers will no longer have to give details of disciplinary procedures and in all firms workers will not be given a written statement of reasons for dismissal. That will make it more difficult for a worker to take a case to an industrial tribunal where, in any case, he or she, under the Bill, might have to pay a deposit of £150 before he or she could apply for access to industrial justice. Simultaneously, the Government have given notice that they propose further restrictions on—or the abolition of—wages councils, which deal with the weakest, poorest, least organised and most vulnerable workers. It is only three years ago that the Government legislated on wages councils, saying that they had got the balance right. Now they are going back on their undertakings and attacking the councils again. The Secretary of State should know that, in the last Parliament, the Select Committee on Employment inquired into wages councils and recommended against their abolition.

I want to touch on three points in my remarks—unemployment, pay and training. There has been a fall in unemployment and a growth in employment, although much of it is part-time. That has happened because the Government have reflated the economy but, unfortunately, they have done it in a wrong and unsustainable way. They are now moving to choke off the expansion with high interest rates. Originally, the Chancellor of the Exchequer pumped billions of pounds into the economy through tax cuts and a huge expansion of private credit. The extra demand began to bring down unemployment—as Labour always said that it would—but it was done in the wrong way. The Budget message was, "Happy days are here again, so let the good times roll." With tax cuts officially lavished on them and a sense of well being from inflated house prices, many of the better-off went on a credit-driven spending spree.

Now the Chancellor is desperately trying to put the engines into reverse. The misjudgment was to give the tax cuts to the very rich, who spent the money on imported goods, and to encourage huge private sector borrowing, which was also spent on imports. That has led to the biggest balance of payments deficit in British history. It is revealing that some Conservative Members find that a joke. The Chancellor now seeks to squeeze billions of pounds out of the economy by punitive interest rates. That will lower living standards and threaten the fall in unemployment.

That is the point in which the Secretary of State should be interested. The Chancellor should have given the tax cuts to the less well-off, who would have spent more in the domestic economy, and allowed borrowing not so much in the private sector as for investment in industry, research and development, education and training, transport, housing, schools, hospitals, increased social provision and the environment.

Mr. Janman *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman has intervened too often. I think that the House wants to get on with the debate.

The actions that I have described would have boosted the domestic economy, not imports, and the result would have been more employment. Moreover, the growth would have been sustainable and it would have strengthened our competitiveness for the future. Instead, we shall all suffer pain in 1989 to pay for the mistakes of the 1988 Budget, and I fear that prospects for employment will be damaged.

The Secretary of State has taken to lecturing us repetitively about pay. I thought that the official monetarist dogma held that pay had nothing to do with inflation, that, if the money supply was held steady, money spent on pay could not be spent on anything else, so things would be held in a steady state. I thought that monetarists believed that pay was a matter to be dealt with freely by consenting parties—a matter for employers and employees who know best—and that the Government should keep their nose out. I thought that Thatcherism spelt the end of incomes policies, but no—we get constant ministerial exhortation on the subject.

After four anti-trade union Acts, presumably the Secretary of State cannot blame the unions for currently rising inflation. Nor are rising costs the cause, particularly in manufacturing. The costs of fuel and materials bought in by manufacturing industry fell last year due to lower

[Mr. Leighton]

commodity prices. The increase in unit labour costs was about 1 per cent. last year because labour productivity in manufacturing rose by 7 per cent., largely offsetting the growth in earnings. Nevertheless, manufacturers' prices rose by 5 per cent. last year. Why? One reason is the rising profits being taken as growing demand, fuelled by credit, comes up against capacity and supply restraints, which themselves are the result of previously deficient investment in plant and training.

This is a classic case of "demand-pull" inflation—wage rises being the consequence, and not the cause, of it. If the Secretary of State is worried about inflation, he should speak to his Cabinet colleagues who are pushing up public sector prices. Rail and Underground fares are increasing by more than twice the rate of inflation and there are large increases in the price of electricity, water, local authority rents and rates. He should also consider how increasing interest rates are forcing up mortgage repayments.

The nine increases in interest rates since last spring's disastrous Budget have triggered increases in mortgage rates from 9·75 per cent. to 13·5 per cent. That means that a £30,000 mortgage now costs £50 a month more and a £50,000 mortgage costs nearly £100 a month more. Millions of people thus enter 1989 with between £1,000 and £1,500 of pre-tax income wiped out at a stroke. In short, the Secretary of State should examine Government policy, not wages, for the cause of rising inflation.

Does the Secretary of State not realise that the example being set at the top is very important? Has he noticed that Britain's top bosses and executives are laughing all the way to the bank? There is no question of restraint there. What does he say about that? He will have seen the survey conducted by Hay Management Consultants, the Saatchi and Saatchi subsidiary, which reported on a bumper bonanza which gave a 30 per cent. increase to top executives. With tax cuts and perks such as cars, pensions, medical insurance and share options, a director on £87,500 a year saw his income rise by 31·5 per cent. The employee on £12,750 a year, however, got only 3·8 per cent. If the Secretary of State is in the business of giving lectures, when will he give lectures to some of the people at the top about the example that they are setting?

The Secretary of State also knows that the first thing that directors of industries which are privatised do is double their salaries. This greed at the top—the grab what you can as quickly as you can attitude—is the very essence of modern Thatcherite Britain. If we are to have more homilies from the Secretary of State, perhaps he will devote his mind to some of those matters.

The basic facts about training are well known. Britain does it abysmally, and historically always has. I suspect that the reason is that, by an accident, the industrial revolution happened here first, giving Britain an initial lead. It was not brought about by the Governments of the day. Indeed, they were probably unaware of what was happening.

Other countries, such as Germany, consciously set up training programmes with the express aim of catching up with Britain. They succeeded more than a century ago and kept on training while we did not. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research has just told us that France produces three times as many mechanical and electrical engineering craftsmen and three times as many building craftsmen as we do. In the German furniture industry, nine out of 10 workers have a vocational qualification based on a three-year apprenticeship course with examinations. In Britain the figure is only one in 10. There is not just a skills gap—it is a yawning skills chasm.

The Government have been in office for nearly 10 years. Their policies have failed. They have made things worse. Our skills handicap in relation to other countries has got much worse, not better. In Britain, the intellectual elite get a first-class education and are a match for their international peers. What we neglect so badly are the educational needs of the mass of the population.

The White Paper talks in foolishly glowing and extravagant terms about YTS, but YTS does not close the skills gap and cannot be compared with the German dual system of apprenticeships. The Secretary of State knows that German companies in Britain are so unimpressed by YTS that last month they set up their own vocational training school in Britain. Nor can anybody pretend that the under-funded employment training programme is equal to its task when it provides only two days a week directed training for six months and reaches less than one tenth of the client group.

A couple of weeks ago, the Select Committee on Employment took evidence from Professor Charles Handy on the changing nature of skills which will be needed in the work force in the late 1990s. He told us that between 70 and 80 per cent. of all jobs will, by the end of the 1990s, be "knowledge" jobs—jobs which require more brain than muscle. Half of those—35 to 40 per cent.—will require brain skills of the order of a higher education degree such as a university or polytechnic degree or a professional qualification. The percentage for the new jobs that will emerge in the 1990s is even higher.

To survive and cope in this new world, we need to more than double the percentage of our young people who go into higher education. Is there any prospect of that? The Secretary of State knows full well that under this Government, with their present policies, that will not happen. Not only are we falling behind other European Community countries: we are falling behind Taiwan and Korea. Unless that is changed—and changed drastically—we shall either be bypassed and wealth production will go elsewhere, or we shall have to import brains and witness much of our industry being taken over by our competitors.

In the United States and many other countries such as Canada, Sweden and Japan, young people who leave school before they are 18 are termed drop-outs. They do not have to worry about health and safety regulations for that age group as they are still in school. On those terms, the majority of our younger generation are dropouts. We are the only country in the world where the majority of 16 and 17-year-olds are not in full-time education or training. In a world of exploding technology, we should aim to double the number of young people who go into higher education.

We should bring married women, many of whom have qualifications, back into the labour market. That will mean a complete overhaul of child care provisions. It is crazy that the Chancellor penalises workplace creches. I appeal to the Secretary of State to use his influence in the Cabinet to see that this is altered, I hope in the next Budget. It also means that we need comprehensive skilling and reskilling of existing workers, including those aged 50 to 60, who cannot get a job at the moment.

What do the Government propose to do? They have abolished the Manpower Services Commission and its successor the Training Commission, although the former was originally set up by a Conservative Administration with all-party support. The Government did not like the MSC because it was a tripartite body, as the Secretary of State quite frankly told us. It was set up in that way so that it would be independent of Government—something that the Government do not like. First, they put Conservative nominees such as the present Lord Young in charge of it, then they gave it orders, which made it a tool of Government, and finally they swamped it with employers' representatives. They they abolished it.

To fill the void, the Bill proposes a major transfer of responsibilities. Training is to be handed over to the employers. This is the new idea, the new way to do things. The so-called training and enterprise councils which are to be set up are to be dominated by employers. One's heart sinks when one reads that this will take four years. It is all explained in the White Paper. Paragraph 6.20 says:

"Developing training through life is not primarily a Government responsibility. Employers must take the lead."

Paragraph 4.45 says:

"The system must be planned and led by employers, because it is they who are best placed to judge skill needs".

As you, Mr. Walker, above all Deputy Speakers, will know, this is a triumph of hope over experience. That policy is a major and crass mistake.

Of course we must involve employers—that is vital and essential—but to imagine, on British experience, that we can leave things to the employers is a dangerous lunacy. If employers could take the lead, why have they not done so before? What has prevented them? If they are willing to train, what has stopped them so far? The training boards were set up precisely because employers were not doing enough. If employers have not invested in training in the past, why should we suppose that they will do so in future without Government intervention?

British employers spend on average 0·15 per cent. of turnover on traning. Overseas, it is more like 2 to 3 per cent. or more—in other words, 20 times as much. British companies too often regard training as an unwelcome on-cost and many prefer to poach rather than to train. The sum total of employers' perceived needs for their individual companies does not add up to to the national need.

Pious hopes, such as those in the White Paper, are not enough. It is time for effective Government action and a statutory back-up in the wider long-term interests of the economy. The market mechanism alone will not deliver the requisite training. It is necessary to involve the trade unions, but the White Paper, and the Bill, are motivated by animus and hostility to the trade unions—another crass mistake. The trade unions and the local authorities must be equal partners. Any programme that is not based on consensus and agreement with the unions and the local authorities is crippled at the outset and is doomed to failure.

ET will not be the success that the Secretary of State has wanted, because he did not use his intelligence enough and was neither able nor prepared to make a few concessions to get the support of the trade unions and the local authorities. It is essential to do that. *[Interruption.]* I hear animal noises from Members on the Conservative Benches. They will be pleased to know that I shall end with some constructive proposals and suggestions for the Government.

First, the Government should examine the French legislation, which obliges firms to spend a certain amount on training—currently 1·4 per cent. of turnover. Firms' accounts are examined and if they have spent the money, that is fine, but if they have not it is taken in tax. The attraction for the Government is that they can get companies to spend on training without setting up bureaucracy to do so. I hope that the Secretary of State will look at what the French are doing. Secondly, the Secretary of State should look at an educational maintenance allowance to encourage youngsters to stay on at school. Thirdly, employers should be required to release all 16 and 17-year-olds for training at least one day a week.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) was the Minister dealing with the first Employment Bill on whose Committee I served. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) discerned a slight difference between that Minister of State and the current incumbent of that position. My fourth suggestion is rather similar to his. It is that all workers should have a passport—he called it a voucher—giving them an annual entitlement to a certain amount of training throughout their lives. Lastly, companies should have training committees in the same way that they have safety committees. What is required is a partnership between all concerned, not freezing out the unions and leaving it all to employers.

7.47 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): After that wide-ranging survey of the state of the British economy and many other matters from the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), I shall drearily confine myself merely to the Bill. I shall start with the employment of women.

One of the many talents among the constellation of talents that is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is his ability to act where others posture. We have heard from two Opposition Members the predictable neanderthal voice about the employment of women. In a way, that is surprising, because as I understand it, most neanderthal men lived underground, and would probably have been glad of female companionship. However, by obliterating the prohibition on women going underground should they so wish, we have sent a clear message that there should be no no-go areas in equal opportunity. No-go areas simply perpetuate the opportunities for the malign or the careless to continue discrimination against women.

Where others go on posturing, the Government act. For example, they have removed the extraordinary and anachronistic system of taxing married people, after years of talk.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does the hon. Gentleman have any experience of what it is like to work down a coal mine in hostile conditions? Coal mines should be no-go areas for females. There are no adequate toilet facilities on coal faces. It is hard work lifting coal, and a female would not be able to cope with it, although I have seen in America women who work in coal mines. I support women's rights, but I have never come across a women's rights organisation—I ask whether he has—who wanted its members to be able to work as coalminers.

Mr. Rowe: I understand that the National Council for Civil Liberties has no objections, but I do not know whether that counts as an organisation looking after women's rights.

The intervention by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) demonstrates the extraordinary obtuseness of those who believe, in the teeth of the evidence, that women are somehow frailer and less robust than men. All the evidence, whether it is longevity, the ability to handle more than one job or whatever, suggests that, on the whole, women are better equipped than men for a number of jobs in difficult circumstances. It has already been mentioned that a significant number of opportunities in high-technology employment in mining and similar occupations are now open to women as a result of the Bill. Without it, they would not have been available to them.

I believe that it is a scandal that it has taken so long to recognise the abilities of women at the highest level. The proportion of women on company boards, holding senior posts in businesses or in this place is still disgracefully low. Now, there is an unstoppable tide towards change. It is extremely appropriate that that change should be backed by demographic pressures. It is an insult, however, for the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to suggest that, somehow, women should be used merely to plug the gaps in the labour market. That has been the traditional Labour party view for far too long.

We are already aware of the existence of the 300 Club, the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs and the new campaign, Women into Business, which is supported by American Express among others and which was dreamed up by the long-established Small Business Bureau. Those organisations are practical and they are achieving a great deal more than the posturing rhetoric of the Opposition Benches.

More women than men are now establishing their own businesses. If capable, women should be at the top in their own right and it would be surprising to discover how many would reach the top if given the opportunity.

Existing statistics demonstrate that we cannot do without women. Some 80 per cent. of those needed to make up the short fall in school leavers will need to be women. —*[Laughter.]* It is interesting that this is a source of derision for Opposition Members, considering that they constantly talk about opportunities for women.

Great changes must be made in working arrangements and they must be made quickly. Some changes have already taken place. Dixons, for example, has started to offer jobs to married women in term times only. That is a flexible response to the changing nature of the labour market and it should be emulated by others.

Job sharing has taken off far too slowly because of the blind prejudice of many employers. My right hon. Friend is aware of a constituent of mine who, for the past two years, has been participating in a highly successful job share, which has been praised by the employers. When the job-sharing partners decided to apply for a promotion within the National Health Service they each received a telephone call from the management of their health authority to ask them whether they would be prepared to apply as an individual for the post. My constituent was told that if she applied as part of a job share she would be at a serious disadvantage. That type of reaction to a perfectly satisfactory method of fitting into the working environment is wholly unacceptable and must be changed.

More and more we need to talk to people around the globe whose work takes place outside the conventional hours and to those firms whose machinery operates throughout the 24 hours. The ordinary working arrangements in this country are simply not good enough.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) derided the employment figures because he said that they contained so many part-time jobs. Those people who were working when he was a boy would describe the current working week as equivalent to a part-time job. We do not need to argue any more about hours because the concept of the normal working week is on its way to the cemetery. We need to create working packages that, to a hitherto unparalleled extent, fit the lives of workers. That change from fitting the worker to the job to fitting the job to the worker is the revolution to which the Bill makes a modest contribution, but if it is to succeed much more must be done.

What is involved goes to the heart of one of the great dilemmas facing British society. How do we create conditions that allow for greater family stability and cohesion while simultaneously allowing for equal opportunities for men and women to work where they want? In the end we can only provide the opportunities and leave it to those who have two wage packets to make satisfactory arrangements for child care. Such arrangements must increasingly rely upon husbands taking their full share of the responsibilities. Until there is a greater acceptance of such arrangements child care arrangements at work must be expanded.

Private companies are beginning to meet that need, and I do not believe that such arrangements should be widely subsidised. In the short term, however, more help is needed for low-income couples and for the single parent, male or female. I hope that we can decide upon a sensible provision so that it is possible to give those on the edge of the labour market and those for whom it is only marginally worth going to work if they must provide their own child care, the incentive to take work. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider that. I look forward to the report on women that will emerge from the inter-ministerial group.

I am encouraged to learn that the upper limit for applications for a place on ET is not set in concrete. The over-50s are the most deprived and the most discriminated against group in today's labour market. I do not believe that to suggest that for a member of that group to get a place on ET is somehow exceptional, is the best way to promote that scheme. The scheme should be marketed in a different way to appeal to that group.

I do not believe that we should discourage applicants who believe that they have a genuine grievance from going to a tribunal and I hope that we can rely on the Secretary of State's assurances about that. I believe that the Bill plays a useful part in sending a signal to the labour market that there are no no-go areas for women any more, and that they should be encouraged to play their full part in that market.

8 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): It is fascinating to hear Tory Ministers introduce Bills such as this. They use such glowing terms. We are told that the measure will widen opportunities for women and young people, and some Conservative Members are in raptures at

the thought of women working down the pits. I predict that, if we do see women down the mines, they will not be the wives and daughters of Conservatives.

The Department of Employment has issued a glossy document describing the proposals in the Bill. This is the season for glossy documents. Hon. Members are being bombarded with glossy brochures from employers pleading for special treatment from the Chancellor in his coming Budget. They think that they should be given special consideration. Glossy brochures are never produced urging a better deal for poorly paid workers.

Mr. Janman: The hon. Gentleman has spoken of receiving glossy brochures from companies pleading for consideration in the Budget and he implied that ordinary working people should benefit from Conservative Budgets. Is he aware that in the last Budget working people benefited greatly from the tax cuts? Why, then, did his party oppose those tax cuts and would it undoubtedly oppose other cuts that the Chancellor might wish to make in future Budgets?

Mr. Eastham: I have never heard such rubbish in all my life. I wish that some of the remarks made by Conservative Members were reported in the newspapers so that the general public might understand their degree of ignorance. Is the hon. Gentleman really comparing the tax concessions made to ordinary working people with the mountain of refunds made available in various ways to the boss class?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) voted against the 2p reduction to 25p in income tax for working people in Britain.

Mr. Eastham: That is correct, and since then my hon. Friends and I have been describing the suffering that working people have endured as a result, for example, of declining standards in the National Health Service. That 2p would have been better spent on improving the quality of life for our people.

I served on the Standing Committee which examined the last measure of this type, the Employment Act 1988. Indeed, there have been half a dozen pieces of legislation of this kind since 1979. When the legislation is being prepared, the civil servants, acting on behalf of the Government, describe in fancy terms what is proposed. It is all sweetness and light, as if the Government are doing working people a favour. But when we read the small print we find that some villains are operating in the Government, depriving working people of their rights and entitlements. The erosion has gone on throughout the last 10 years.

This measure virtually does away with protection for women and young workers. It permits unrestricted hours of work, and various complications are likely to arise over hours of work and split shifts. We shall see people going to work in the morning, being sent away in the middle of the day and returning in the evening to make up their time. There will not be any straightforward arrangements; all sorts of conditions—night shifts and the like—will be introduced as part of new working conditions.

Restrictions will also be imposed on trade unions, and redundancy entitlements will be curbed. The Bill is completely flawed because it does nothing to ensure that employers take action to improve production, to enhance the prosperity of the nation and to create fairness and justice for the people.

Let us not forget that there are two sides to society. We do not want an us-and-them situation. I fear that that state of affairs is applauded by the Government, who take a brutal attitude towards ordinary working people. This state of affairs does not exist in other countries. Employers in Sweden, Japan and Germany adopt a different philosophy from the view in Tory Britain. We should learn some lessons from them. After all, they have been far more successful than us.

The word "barriers" crops up in, among other places, the Department of Employment's glossy document. The Tories imply that these so-called barriers are creating problems for working people, and they want to relieve them of these barriers. We in the Opposition do not regard some of them as barriers. We claim that they are protecting decent working conditions. It is clearly a matter of interpretation whether something is a barrier or a protection.

Rates of pay can be described as a regular old favourite of the Tories. We are witnessing the final throw in their efforts to abolish wages councils. Those councils affect 2·5 million low-paid workers, people receiving from £74·44 to £92·82 a week. It is clear that, in the view of Conservative Members, those rates are too high, so they are removing any protection the low paid have received through wages councils.

Are Conservative Members concerned at all about the pay received by employers? There seems to be no limit to or shame about what one section of the community can get, even though it might be excessively greedy. Consider what some newspapers have said on this issue recently:

"Bosses hit the jackpot with big pay rises".

"Britain's bosses accept a pay bonanza in 1987".

"Top pay up 30 per cent."

The Times reported in December:

"Perks help lift executive pay by 30 per cent."

The Guardian reported:

"Top executives' pay up by nearly a third."

That newspaper revealed:

"Executives' pay shot up by more than 30 per cent. during the past year, dwarfing the 3·8 per cent. average increase for ordinary workers."

Despite that, the Government are not satisfied. They remain determined to remove any protection given to the low-paid, people receiving £70 or £90 a week. The newspapers seem to applaud people whose greed gains them rises of 30 per cent. or more. Conservative Members seem to think it respectable that they should be allowed to do that.

An article in one newspaper last month described

"How Britain's bosses fuel the wages fire."

It said:

"Fifty per cent of executives that get a performance related bonus are taking an extra 21 per cent. of their salary in a cash lump sum, according to a report from pay consultants Noble Lowndes.

Not only have these top employees benefited from a reduction in the highest rate of tax—cut by a third in the last Budget—but they are also getting more and more perks."

At the same time, there is ever increasing poverty. Last week I attended a meeting in Manchester on the grave problem of poverty. We were told that one third of the city's population live in poverty. In the Greater Manchester area, 48 per cent. of workers receive less than the European decency threshold. That is the wealth that

[Mr. Eastham]

the workers are enjoying. In spite of that, the Government are not satisfied. They are hellbent on reducing rates of pay even more in the name of the so-called free market economy.

If we are talking about barriers, let us examine the barriers facing working people. Let us take the problem of equal pay for women, who are still paid about 72 per cent. of men's wages. It is believed that they will not achieve parity until the year 2086, assuming that they continue to make progress. It takes up to four years to settle the claims of women who have a grievance. The burdensome procedure entails 15 different stages; that is what women must go through to pursue their quest for equal pay.

Women face other barriers, too. They have to cope with young children, but employers do not provide support for them. If we are to sweep away the barriers, as the Government say they want to do, children must be looked after. I have seen in Sweden that providing for the protection and care of the children of married women workers is a practical proposition, and it has not made that nation bankrupt. The Swedish economy is one of the most successful in the world, and unemployment there is 1·7 per cent.

The other day I picked up a Department of Employment notice, from which I want to quote a sentence that refers to the Employment Act 1988:

"It ensures that union members have rights which they both want, and are fully entitled to expect in a free society."

The Government are always harping on the word "free". Increasingly, people are becoming worried about this so-called free society. I cite the example of the Economic League in the context of taking away workers' rights. The league is a private secret service, not answerable to anyone, which does away with the rights of men, women and families to a job. There should be an inquiry into the barriers erected by the Economic League. There may be resistance in the Select Committee on Employment to such an investigation, but there should be one. The league has been exposed on television and in the newspapers. We may have to wait for an inquiry, but we shall hold one when the Labour party is returned to power—*[Laughter.]* Conservative Members are laughing because they are not interested in people's rights. These sinister organisations are being encouraged, and the Conservative party is not prepared to do anything about that.

Conservative Members sneer about the Economic League. I want to read an excerpt from a letter sent to me by a constituent. After they have heard it perhaps they will not find it so funny:

"Having gone through the Burma Campaign during the war and on receipt of the Burma Star—1939-45 Star—the defence medal and the 1939-1945 medal, on my return to the UK having done my stint against Fascism I thought I had earned the right to democratic free expression.

You can imagine my dismay when I got a phone call from a journalist informing me that my name and my daughter's name, along with many others, is on a Black List held by the Economic League and has been for some years.

Since my return from the Far East at the end of the war I have committed no crimes, Rape, Murder, Robbery. I have, however, been guilty of fighting for peace, against the Vietnam war, for democratic rights in Iraq, representing my union at all levels both locally and nationally and as shop steward convenor fighting to improve the wages and conditions of the workers in industry. For these activities I am not ashamed. At the moment I am working with the most deprived section, the unemployed, in a voluntary capacity"

[Interruption.]—I heard a Conservative Member call out, "Communist." That shows the sort of people who sit on the Conservative Benches. It shows what is going through the minds of some of the young Tories who have just arrived in the House, at a time when people are expressing concern about freedom in Britain and about totalitarianism.

Barriers face handicapped people as well. Again, I quote:

"Six million people in Britain suffer . . . from some form of disability. Disabled people constitute 12 per cent. of the working population . . . many have valuable skills. Their job prospects depend, however, not so much on their abilities and performance as on the good will and farsightedness of their employers."

That sort of barrier is not mentioned in the glossy documents, in which there is no balance. That is what upsets us about them.

Another barrier facing working people is created by the continued lowering of standards of health and safety. Some of my hon. Friends have already mentioned this problem. The *Employment Gazette* for January 1989 says that there were 500 fatal accidents and 33,000 serious injuries at work in a 12-month period. There were probably more, but they were not all reported.

Trade union representation has been further curtailed, and that ties in with the question of health and safety. It is important that there should be trade union representation for workers.

A working man seeking compensation for injury can usually go only to his trade union. He cannot go through the courts and get barristers to represent him. Another curtailment is the Government's further restrictions on the trade unions.

I should like to suggest what we might do, if we are sincere, to improve the industrial performance of Britain. We could introduce cheaper loans for industrial investment. Interest rates are going through the ceiling. Britain has the highest rates in Europe. When I was in Japan with the Select Committee on Employment I learned that the rate of interest on bank loans was 4½ per cent. That gave an incentive to improve productivity and to make industry competitive. In Britain the interest rate is probably 16 or 18 per cent. now. How can we compete when we have such high rates?

When I was in Japan I found that the philosophy there was quite different. It seems to be that the employers do not buy labour and workers do not sell it. They all join the company and their total philosophy is different from ours. We must get over the idea of "us and them". I shall return to the theme of brutality, the brutal attitude that seems to be encouraged by the Government, the "smash-all" thing. They tell everybody to knock the workers about and they call it progress. It is not progress; it is a disaster and will continue to be a disaster.

One of the threads in the debate is skill training . We ought to consider better skill training. Over the past 10 years the Government have done many things to destroy training. They have abolished most of the industrial training boards and two or three years ago they closed skill centres. The Minister boasted that we presently have more than 100,000 people in training. Two or three years ago the Select Committee on Employment received a firm promise that over 300,000 people would be in training. Lord Young made that promise, but at that time he was running the Manpower Services Commission. The Minister boasts that

100,000 people in training is a great achievement, but it is one third of what the Government prophesied three years ago.

The *Financial Times* in November 1988 contained an article about skill training. It said:

"In electrical skills, France trained 32,000 young people to craft level in 1984, compared with 7,000 in Britain; 13,000 to craft/technician level compared with 7,000 in Britain, and 14,000 to technician/higher technician standard, while Britain trained 9,000 to that standard."

If we are honest with ourselves, those are the comparisons that we must make. Even *The Daily Telegraph*, which cannot be said to be a great supporter of the Opposition, said last month:

"If evidence were needed, we need only point to the chilling differentials between the levels of British training and those of our most successful competitors. In Japan 95 per cent. of young people are in full-time education up to the age of 18, compared with 32 per cent. in England. Thirty-eight per cent. of Japanses enter higher education and 48 per cent. of north Americans, against only 15 per cent. of Britons."

Surely there are some lessons to be learned. We keep on telling the Government that, but they keep on fooling themselves, like the king with his suit of clothes, and nobody seems to recognise that fact. Until there is more honesty and proper reports that will show us the kind of scientific balance that exists between employers and workers and investment and banking, we will never see any real progress or prosperity.

We shall not make progress by making working conditions worse. If we want examples of the truth of that we should look at what is happening in Germany, Sweden and Japan. We compare very badly with other industrialised nations. When it comes to the crunch, we are probably near the bottom of the pile. Governments are elected to serve all the people and not just the privileged few. Regrettably, over the past 10 years that has been the Conservative's philosophy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Several hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. I understand that the Front Bench speakers will seek to reply to the debate in 55 minutes. The arithmetic is obvious, and I am afraid that unless speeches are much shorter some hon. Members will be disappointed.

8.25 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I support the Bill and welcome it as, I hope, a first step to future major deregulation of the labour market. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to be congratulated on sweeping away outdated regulations and restrictions that impair opportunities for women in various parts of the labour market and form barriers to young people.

Given the Opposition's philosophy of life, one can understand their attitude to some parts of the Bill. Their reaction to this part of the Bill and their ranting and raving is quite laughable. To hear them going on one would think that the Government were about to round up women at gunpoint and force them down the mines. Clearly, that is not the case and the British people will see right through the political posturing of the Opposition over this part of the Bill.

I welcome the amendments to the employment protection legislation of the 1970s but I fear that they do not go far enough. I remind my hon. Friends and the Secretary of State that we still have a huge plethora of legislation that interferes with the way in which companies recruit, dismiss and pay their employees. Even after the Bill becomes law we will still have sex discrimination legislation, race relations and equal pay legislation and wage councils and many parts of the Employment Protection Act 1975 remaining on the statute book.

It is disconcerting that even this Government will bring forward in Northern Ireland a Bill, the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, that will add to the huge plethora of regulations that employers have to put up with in that part of the United Kingdom. However, the Government have recognised this problem. The 1986 White Paper entitled "Building Business . . . Not Barriers" said:

"Regrettably, it is those regulations designed to offer security of employment that have done most to persuade employers that they should not recruit unless absolutely essential."

Although I criticise the existence of much of the legislation that I have mentioned, or major components of much of it, I agree that much of the legislation is well intentioned. In certain instances it will genuinely help some employers in the short-term. However, when one takes the picture as a whole one sees that this legislation which was brought upon us layer upon layer in the 1970s, reduces the willingness of firms to risk recruiting and impedes their ability to react quickly to market conditions and to labour market conditions specifically. It creates the need for unnecessary staff and therefore extra costs and management overheads.

In the 1970s unemployment under the Labour Government was going up, but one junction within industry that was continuing to recruit and expand were personnel departments because companies had to take on many extra professional staff to keep up with the layer upon layer of legislation that was hitting them, telling them who they could recruit, how they recruit them and many other things.

Obviously, those increases in overheads and management costs reduce companies' cost-effectiveness and, therefore, their competitiveness both in domestic and world markets. That reduces their ability to sell their goods and services to those markets, which in turn reduces their turnover and their profit. That in turn undermines job security for employees in the company and reduces companies tax contributions to the Chancellor. In other words, this impedes wealth creation and, although in some instances much of the legislation may be in the interests of some employees, it is clearly not in the national interest because it impedes wealth creation and the flow of revenue to the Chancellor.

Time is short this evening and I wish to make some brief comments about three other parts of the Bill—training, paid time off for union officials and industrial tribunals. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to bring forward his proposals that relate to industrial tribunals. Some people—they may well be in a minority—bring cases out of pure spite or just to cause trouble. It is interesting to note—I believe that I am right in saying this—that the area of employment protection legislation and industrial tribunals is the only area of the law where the accused person is guilty until proven innocent. That is the basis from which a company starts. In the rest of our legal system, a person is innocent until proved guilty.

It is right to introduce at the chairman's discretion the maximum £150 deposit, which will act as a deterrent against people bringing cases unless they have a good and

[Mr. Tim Janman]

genuine case under employment protection legislation. I have worked in personnel and I know that companies take industrial tribunals seriously because, clearly, it is not good for a company's PR image if it is found wanting in this area and to have treated one or more of its employees unfavourably. This measure will protect companies so that their time is not wasted by individuals who act irresponsibly.

The current regime whereby some trade union officials have a licence to go round stirring up trouble at their workplace or at other people's workplaces and being paid for doing so by the employers for whom they are supposed to be working is clearly ridiculous. Again, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to bring forward proposals that will tighten this up. My only fear is that the tightening up will not be quite tight enough, but it is a start and a step in the right direction.

I welcome the abolition of the Training Commission. Centralised bodies are not the answer. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said earlier that, 100 years ago, Germany was having to have to catch up with this country in respect of the level of training. One hundred years ago, there was not that much state interference or centralised bureaucratic control in the way that training was delivered in this country. Tonight, we have heard Opposition Members admit that this country was very much in the lead in these matters at that time.

The responsibility for training must ultimately lie with the employers. There are many reasons why it is in the employers' interest to acknowledge and implement that responsibility. The new training and enterprise councils will catalyse a return to such a way of operating with regard to training.

One of our weaknesses in many instances is the inability of technical colleges to adapt to the training needs of companies in the locality. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) spoke about training vouchers. It is worth considering a voucher system for individuals and companies vis-a-vis technical colleges so that, rather than simply offering what is convenient for them to offer to local companies, they have a financial incentive to offer training courses to those companies that are relevant to their needs in a modern, thriving economy.

The Bill will go some way to relieving small firms of unnecessary regulations and it will, in some small degree, liberalise the labour market. The Government believe in the free market. I hope that the Bill is only the first step down the road of a deregulated labour market which is, of course, a major and fundamental component of the wider free market.

8.36 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Employment Bills should be about creating the climate and conditions for employment. They should be carefully drafted measures designed to define the rights of the employed, to enhance and clarify them and to support good industrial relations and, in so doing, to aid national prosperity. By those criteria, this Bill fails miserably, eroding rights, restricting the advances of a century of experience, eroding good industrial relations and undermining them, not helping them.

The Government's hypocrisy—they pretend to care for the young and promise legislation to prevent child abuse yet propose to pass legislation that is, in effect, a charter for the abuse of young people by wicked employers—is clear for all of us to see, sweeping away a century of protective rights for young people, giving a green light to the greedy employer and allowing the exploiter to excel.

I started work when I was 16, exactly 16 years ago. I had to go out to work because one of my parents had died. I worked in a shop from the age of 16 until the age of 21 to help my mother pay her mortgage. I did not know that these rights existed and that this protection was given, but, looking back, I and millions of young people are grateful for the fact that we have this protection.

The Government are now proposing that we go back to the 19th century. The Bill proposes the removal of virtually all protection of young persons against long hours of work, shift work and night work. The Government are to do away with statutory meal and rest breaks for youngsters and rights to holidays and days off. The Minister is to give himself wider powers to repeal any other protective legislation, including laws protecting children under school-leaving age. Coupled with the proposed abolition of wages councils and the Government's blind eye to abuses of the YTS and similar courses, it is obvious that these proposals are made solely to help unscrupulous employers exploit young workers without hindrance or concern for health, safety and welfare.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) pointed out, the Bill ignores the recommendations made to the Government by the Health and Safety Commission. The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) said that Opposition Members glory in the level of unemployment. As he is not present in the Chamber, I say to other Conservative Members that, if we glory in unemployment, they glory in the death and injury of so many young people under the YTS and other schemes. The Health and Safety Commission accident figures show that 16 to 24-year-olds are more at risk of accidents than older workers. That is partly due to inexperience and immaturity. Young people need more protection. The Government have accepted that in other aspects of policy, but not in employment.

The proposal to abolish restrictions on night working set out in the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act 1920 would be a clear breach of article 7(8) of the European social charter. The Bill is about removing rights. The Government's aim is to make life as difficult as possible for those who leave their employment for whatever reason. That is why they are raising the qualification period for a written statement of reasons for dismissal. It is obvious that employees who do not have a written statement will find it very difficult to obtain further employment.

Yesterday one of my constituents telephoned me to tell me that she had been dismissed from her employment, having worked there for six months. She asked her employer to provide reasons for her dismissal. He refused, and when she went to press him again he called the police.

In some cases young people will not be entitled to benefit because there will be an allegation that they have been dismissed for misconduct. The Government's proposal removes the right to a written statement from an estimated 5 million workers. In 1986, 44 per cent. of all cases arising under jurisdictions other than unfair

dismissal and discrimination received by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service concerned the employer's failure to provide a written statement on dismissal.

The Bill is about undermining trade union rights. The Government claim that current legislation can result in employers having to pay lay union officials to take time off for activities unrelated to the terms on which the employer recognises the union. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that time off for trade union duties adversely affects employers. The duties of an official may require him or her to participate in the planning of strategy as well as negotiating sessions where groups of workers other than those he represents are involved. Under the Bill, shop stewards would not be given time off to attend those meetings.

The removal of the requirement for companies with fewer than 20 employees to provide written disciplinary procedures is absurd. Why should a distinction between different responsibilities be placed on different sized establishments? Employees do not learn the procedures any better because their workplace is smaller. It is in the interests of employees and employers to ensure that there are clear grievance procedures to allow everyone to understand the position.

The Minister justifies his proposal by claiming that, in small firms, employees clearly know their roles and responsibilities. That view contrasts sharply with that of ACAS. In November 1985, ACAS produced a consultative document which argued for a new draft code of practice on disciplinary and other procedures in employment. It argued that

"in every organisation there should be clearly understood procedures, however simple, which are consistent with the general principles and intentions of the code."

Before I was elected to this House, I worked as a solicitor for a law centre in Leicester. I had to advise many people about taking claims to an industrial tribunal. The introduction of the deposit order for industrial tribunals will be a major obstacle for an employee seeking justice. Industrial tribunals were set up in 1964. Since then, through complex legislation, their work has grown enormously. It is now very difficult for employees to understand the complexity of the law.

In this Bill the Government should have ensured that there was ready access to industrial tribunals. Instead, they want to deter potential applicants. Although under the terms of this Bill employees can request deposit orders, in practice that is highly unlikely. Between 1986 and 1987 there were 594 applications for industrial tribunal pre-hearing assessments from employers, as against only 15 from employees. The sifting mechanism of the ACAS conciliation stage already exists which, in 1986-87, resulted in 11,129 ACAS conciliated settlements out of 39,000 industrial tribunal applications. In the same year, a further 14,149 cases were settled privately or withdrawn after the conciliation stage.

The deposit requirement will have a disproportionate impact on unemployed and low-paid litigants. Seventy-five per cent. of claims before industrial tribunals come from unemployed people who simply cannot afford to pay the £150 deposit which might be ordered by the chairman of the tribunal. Once the deposit is ordered, it prejudges the outcome of the case. The Government should have ensured that legal aid was available at industrial tribunals so that people could be properly assisted.

So much good could have been done through a new Employment Bill. The Minister could have used it as an opportunity to correct the mistakes that the Government have made in employment policy over the past 10 years. At the heart of the Bill is a desire to turn the equal partnership that has developed in industry between employer and employee into one of master and slave. That destroys the real need for both parties to a contract of employment to respect each other. The Government should be ashamed of themselves.

8.46 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Unlike Opposition Members, I interpret the Bill as another example of the way in which the Government are prepared to carry out measured reform where that is necessary and desirable. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), I want to concentrate on the parts of the Bill which advance the principle of equal treatment for men and women in vocational training, promotion and working conditions.

I have always been surprised at the resigned and docile way in which so many women, having carried out virtually every conceivable task in factories and elsewhere during the last war, then resumed in the main the traditional roles in the home and bringing up children. That is fulfilling, needs to be done and is in no way to be devalued, but for so many it was considered to be a "woman's place" without choice or relief and leading to absolute dependency regardless of inclination or ability, intellectual or physical.

There has been a tremendous advance since 1945 in the number of women in work and more recently in the number of women in top jobs, but the docility of women after the war created an attitude which still prevails about what women do and how successfully they do it. The regulations that were originally designed to protect women have become discriminatory, and these were and have been tolerated to a remarkable extent.

Perhaps the most ambitious attempt in recent years to promote equality of opportunity between men and women was the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 which had all-party support. Even that legislation allowed obvious inequalities to continue, not to protect women from harm but to protect and preserve jobs of male union members from women. That was the burden of much of the protection in that legislation and why it did not go far enough. I recall that in 1975, when the Conservative party was in opposition, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir D. Gilmour) referred to the few genuine arrangements to remove the discrimination incorporated in that legislation, particularly in relation to matters which this Bill addresses with regard to working hours and the employment of women in mines and elsewhere.

Those restrictions are to be swept away at last in a long overdue reform. It is easy to misrepresent the reforms by stating that there are no suitable arrangements for women working in places like mines. That has always been used as an excuse as to why women should not, in respect of many activities, do that of which they are plainly capable.

The proposed legislation will not deal entirely with those women who have no wish to take wider employment opportunities but who require assistance because they are not willing or able to work and who wish simply to stay at

[Mr. David Martin]

home to look after their families in the traditional way. In my view, their preference should always be respected and supported.

I refer finally to the Equal Opportunities Commission, which was created by a Conservative Government. Its duties were increased by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, when the commission was given its present wider role. On Second Reading of that legislation, the then Home Secretary gave the commission not a permanent life but a life

"for however long that continues to be necessary."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1975; Vol. 889, c. 521.]

He therefore envisaged that at some time there would be an end to the Equal Opportunities Commission, and so do I. I hope that this Bill will hasten its redundancy.

I do not expect that view necessarily to be shared with enthusiasm by Opposition Members. I remember the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) making a speech on the Loyal Address on 22 November in which, far from looking forward to the end of such catalysts as the Equal Opportunities Commission, she envisaged a Ministry for women

"which will . . . have the power and the duty to examine all Government policies for their impact on women and ensure alterations when necessary. For this purpose, it will have outposts in each Government Department. The Treasury will no longer reign supreme. Such a Ministry will inform women about Government actions and ask for their views, and, for these purposes, will set up regional offices."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 39.]

I suspect that the hon. Lady will have a hard task persuading her right hon. and hon. Friends to implement such arrangements, particularly in meeting the kind of union objections that stopped the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 going much wider. In any event, we have been warned by the hon. Lady that her intention is that commissarial busybodies would be set to work in every central or regional Department.

If a Labour Government are ever returned in the distant future, I hope that by then women will take for granted equal status, rights and opportunities and will view with contempt such patronisation as something belonging to an older and unenlightened age. I hope that we may continue with measures such as the Bill to advance the cause of women until such time as there is no distinction whatsoever in their opportunities.

8.52 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) for his free advertisement for Labour party policy. He may be interested to learn that the trade unions support our policy for a Ministry for women and will be pleased to see the impact of Government policies on women examined in the way that I described.

The Bill is presented as something that will improve women's opportunities. We are told over and over again that it will open doors, and that it introduces no element of compulsion. Plainly, that is not true. The factors that prevent women enjoying equal opportunities have nothing to do with the protection offered by the Factories Act 1961. It is not that Act which ensures that 93 per cent. of Members of Parliament are male. It is not that Act which ensures that 87 per cent. of gynaecologists—of all things—are male. It is not the Factories Act 1961 which ensures that the majority of managers in retail distribution are male, although the majority of their employees are female. That Act has nothing to do with such inequalities—and I could go on and on, describing many more examples.

The Factories Act 1961 offers women some protection. Women are not, in practice, queuing up anxiously to do jobs that will involve them in constant night work in factories. Men put up with many conditions of work that they should not tolerate. We could do with a levelling up of some working conditions, to improve those of men. What we are being given in the name of equality is a levelling down of working conditions—so that, for example, women will be permitted to clean moving machinery. Nobody should be expected to clean moving machinery—it should first be turned off.

We are not bowing or curtseying with gratitude for the provisions of the Bill. It is no big deal. Instead, we view it alongside the Social Security Bill which was before the House for its Second Reading yesterday—and it is here that the element of compulsion is introduced. Under existing legislation, it is illegal for women to undertake certain jobs—but with this Bill, they will risk being deprived of social security benefits if they refuse them in future. The two Bills between them will deprive women of the right to say whether certain work is suitable for them. It is an insult to our intelligence and to our common sense to suggest that the Employment Bill has anything to do with equality.

One can say the same of the so-called advances for young workers. One hon. Member said that work should fit the worker and that the worker should not be forced to fit the job. I entirely agree. I am waiting to hear which young workers need to be permitted to work 50 hours a week!

What protection do young workers have? Forty per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds work in shops. They are given magnificent protection. They must have a 20-minute break after working five or five-and-a-half hours, whereas adults have that entitlement only after working six hours. There is little help there for the young person. Young workers may not be employed for more than 48 hours per week but there are exceptions in times of unusual or seasonal pressure. In general, young people may not work between 10 pm and 6 am, and they must be allowed an interval of rest of 11 consecutive hours in every 24. Those are the extravagant restrictions and protections that are being swept away by the Conservatives. I am sure that young people will hardly be extraordinarily grateful to them.

In factories young people at present may not work for more than nine hours a day or possibly 10 or 10½ with overtime in five-day factories, or 48 hours a week exclusive of breaks. They cannot start work before 7 am or after 8 pm, and they must have a half-hour break after four-and-a-half hours' work. Those are the protections that are being swept away with the excuse that the obligations on employers make them wholly resistant to the idea of taking on young people.

I think that the employers who will take advantage of the lifting of such restrictions are employers whom we do not want in this country. I would prefer that they all went bankrupt and left the way clear for the good employers—or at least better employers—who will be undermined by the Bill. The Bill is a charter for the worst, most scurrilous and most exploitative employers.

We talk loosely about 16 and 17-year-olds, but these young people can be as young as 15 years eight months.

According to the Library, the age is between 15 years eight months and 16 years seven months, depending on the relationship between a pupil's birthday and the statutory school-leaving age. Just in case people do not realise this, let me point out that that person of 15 years eight months will be an adult in employment law, working in adult conditions but not for adult wages. If that person is a girl, however, and is unfortunate enough to give birth to a baby, in social security law she does not exist at all. Although she is a mother she cannot claim for herself or her child through the social security system. She is entirely dependent on the attitude of her parents.

Young people of 16 or 17 have had their entitlement to income support removed. It is not simply that they are not treated as adults in connection with rates of entitlement; they are treated entirely differently in principle. Social security law says, "You are not an adult," but employment law says, "Oh yes you are: stand on your own two feet." Hon. Members have used that expression in the Chamber tonight. When we object, we are told that we are being patronising to young people. But it is not their young people who find themselves working in grotty jobs in shops or factories, and who will suffer from these employers. Their young people, in fact, will grow up to be such employers, if their parents are anything to go by.

I believe that we are speaking not only in the best interests, but with the full support, of today's youngsters —when they realise what is happening. We want more opportunities for women and for young people. We want access to training. We want child care provision and humanity at work. What we do not want is this charter for scurrilous and exploitive employers. A Conservative Member has said that times have changed: they certainly have. Every day, with every Bill that Conservative Members bring forward, times change for the worse.

9.1 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Time is running a little short, so I shall not make all the comments that I hoped to make. Let me say, however, that I am pleased that the Government are able to call on the National Council for Civil Liberties for support on the relaxation of regulations relating to women.

The NCCL is accusing opponents of the lifting of restrictions on women working in mines of stereotyping. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) refused to answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who asked where he stood on that provision: did he or did he not support women being allowed to go down the mines? I hope that whoever winds up for the Opposition will make it clear exactly where the Labour party stands, but having listened to Opposition Members it seems to me that by and large the party is very much opposed to the new provision.

It must be somewhat embarrassing for the TUC and the Labour party, because the Labour party did not really know which of its lines of dogma to abandon—its opposition to all forms of deregulation or its obsession with anything vaguely connected with equal opportunities. Conservative Members believe that women should at least have the freedom to choose whether or not they wish to apply for jobs down the mine.

Mr. Eric Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Rubbish.

Mr. Riddick: I hear an Opposition Member shouting, "Rubbish." It sounds to me like good old-fashioned Labour chauvinism coming to the surface. Women should be free to apply for those jobs. Then it is up to managers to decide whether an individual is capable of doing the job.

It is interesting to note one major difference between this Employment Bill and previous employment Bills introduced by the Government. This Bill is not primarily concerned with trade unions. There is now a proper equilibrium between trade unions and employers, between trade unions and their members and between trade union activities and the law, but the law on the closed shop remains glaringly inadequate. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) has already referred to that fact. Like him, I believe that the omission of any reference to the closed shop must be remedied before the Bill completes its passage through the House.

The closed shop, in any shape or form, is a denial of personal freedom. Every individual should have the right to belong or not to belong to a trade union. In the 1970s, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) gave the unions carte blanche to ride roughshod over the rights of ordinary working people and to force millions of them to belong to trade unions, whether or not they wished to do so.

My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench believe that clauses 10 and 11 of the Employment Act 1988, which made it unlawful for trade unions to take action to maintain closed shops, and which made it unlawful for employers to sack employees for not belonging to trade unions, will effectively result in the demise of the closed shop. I realise that those two clauses have been in force only since July of last year—about six months—but so far as I can ascertain from my inquiries those provisions have made no difference whatever to the closed shops that were in existence then. They are still in existence; they are still alive and well. My right hon. Friend announced recently that he intends to review the operation of the pre-entry closed shop. I welcome his announcement. I hope that his review will be completed shortly so that appropriate amendments can be included in the Bill.

About 3·7 million people are estimated to be captive within the closed shop arrangements. That information was provided by the Labour party's research department. *[Interruption.]* The fact is that a host of Labour-controlled councils—such as Sandwell, Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent, Darlington and my own local council of Kirklees—continue to hoodwink their employees into believing that they must belong to a trade union.

Kirklees metropolitan district council does everything in its power to operate a closed shop and to hoodwink its employees into belonging to a trade union. A Kirklees council employee recently sent to me a copy of his contract of employment, which says:

"this authority is party to a trade union membership agreement and it is a condition of your employment that you join one of the appropriate signatory trade unions for your employment group within 13 weeks of commencement of your employment".

In addition, every job advertisement in the local press states that Kirklees council operates a union membership agreement. The final proof is that Kirklees attempts to operate its closed shop by allowing unions to use its own

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mailing facilities, reminding Kirklees employees that a closed shop operates and that they should therefore join a trade union.

There can be no doubt that Kirklees council is operating a closed shop, yet that closed shop has no legal standing whatsoever. If it were challenged in a court of law, it would be thrown out in a matter of minutes because there has been no ballot of employees to approve the closed shop. The vast majority of existing and new employees believe, and will continue to believe, that union membership is compulsory—in the absence of any information to the contrary from their employer, or in the absence of legislation which make it abundantly clear that all closed shop arrangements are unlawful.

I believe that there is a solution to the problem and that it would not be too difficult for the Government to provide that solution. They should write into the Bill that it shall be unlawful for any person to maintain a union membership agreement. I moved an amendment to that effect to the Employment Bill last year.

I realise that Ministers are concerned that disgruntled individuals might make malicious or erroneous claims stating that they failed to obtain a particular job because they refused to join a trade union. The way to overcome such problems is to give any person who believes that a union membership agreement exists the right to draw it to the attention of the commissioner for the rights of trade union members. The commissioner will investigate the claim and, if it is substantiated, he will apply for a court order banning the trade union membership agreement. If the employer or the union failed to comply with the court order, they would be in contempt of court, with all the serious implications that that involves.

Since the Government took office, they have enacted four major pieces of trade union legislation. It is time for them to stop skirting around the vital issue and legislate to make the closed shop illegal.

I heard the noises made by Opposition Members when I talked about the closed shop. They talk about trade union rights, but they are not interested in the rights of trade unionists. They want to see people in a union whether or not they want to be there. We should make the closed shop illegal so that British trade unionists and employers know where they stand. Once we have done that, we shall have achieved a massive extension of personal freedom.

9.11 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): There is an aphorism that things mellow with age. That is not true of this Government or the Prime Minister in their attitudes to women and working-class youth. The Bill is the sixth major attack on workers' rights in the past 10 years. It is nasty and vindictive and follows the pattern of the past decade. Time will prevent me from turning my attention to all the clauses, but if I am fortunate enough to be selected to serve on the Committee I shall deal then with those that I am unable to mention now.

One clause increases from six months to two years the service needed before an employee is given written reasons for his dismissal. There are clauses attacking the right of people to take time off for trade union duties.

Clause 18 deals with the dissolution of the Training Commission. I am not too upset by its demise, but I am not happy with the Government's plan to hand over to the private sector almost all aspects of industrial training. I am also unhappy about the new training task force set up to advise the Government on training—it is a successor to the Training Commission—on which employers will have two thirds of the seats.

My feelings on the axing of the Training Commission have been coloured by nearly six years as a Member of the House. During that time I have campaigned on health and safety, particularly as it affects young workers on youth opportunities programmes or youth training schemes. Safety is currently the responsibility of the Training Commission. The House may remember the debates I have initiated on the number of deaths that have occurred. It may remember the delegations I have led to Ministers and the correspondence I have had with the MSC. I do not apologise for repeating some of the points made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). He referred to the senseless and tragic death of Derek Cain, a 17-year-old Sheffield lad who died in December 1982 at the waste disposal firm of Plumb and Son in Sheffield. That death has national implications, and so has the Bill.

Derek Cain's father, Richard, helped me to draft a private Member's Bill on health and safety and on the role of the MSC. Derek died from a massive injury caused by the revolving blades of a paper shredding machine. His father was not satisfied with the derisory compensation offered by the MSC. As a single parent he was offered £52. The other parents I have met after similar bereavements have received £78 when there are two parents. His father was also unhappy with the MSC's abdication of its responsibility for health and safety. He spent six years taking court action against the MSC which concluded a few days before Christmas.

The MSC's main argument—it is reflected in the contributions made by Tory Members to this debate—is that health and safety is the responsibility of the provider of training schemes. An MSC official in the court said that once the MSC had passed the scheme as being safe, it was up to the sponsor to keep its end of the bargain.

The MSC's other main argument was that Derek was partly responsible for his own death because he should not have been on a baling machine in a paper shredding factory. Fifteen MSC officials attended that trial. They were so sure of winning that—this was reported to me—the solicitor representing the MSC was grinning like a chimpanzee before the trial began. What he found funny about the fact or the circumstances of the death of a 17-year-old escapes me.

Richard's solicitor was able to find letters from other former YOP trainees confirming that every young worker in that plant was asked to work on the baler. He was able to prove that the MSC checked the premises only from the outside of the factory. When the MSC was asked why it did not even write to the factories inspectorate to find out whether Plumbs was on its list—and it was not—the MSC official responsible responded in court by saying, "It would have meant too much paperwork." A lad of 17 was killed because of a lack of paperwork. The Bill is full of similar excuses such as paperwork being a burden on business. Perhaps when the Minister replies to the debate he would like to tell Derek's father Richard about paperwork.

In summing up, the judge said that he was appalled at the number of deaths and injuries on YTS, and so am I. More than 50 families have been bereaved over the years. In the past three months, YTS was the most dangerous occupation in Britain—outranking construction or shipbuilding. The judge also said that the MSC had been negligent in placing the young lad in those premises. I agree. That is another reason why I am not too upset about the abolition of the ineffectual Training Commission.

In 1972 Richard was offered £52 compensation. In deciding the outcome of the case, the judge awarded £20,000 compensation and costs against Plumbs, which could run to £100,000. That case has major national implications. Because it happened in the same week as the Lockerbie disaster, the press were rightly engaged in other matters, but surely the other 50 families should be told about the level of compensation and other firms throughout the country who have acted in the same cavalier way should know that they face the risk of incurring costs of £100,000 if found guilty in court.

The Bill should have contained what Derek's father got me to put into the private Member's Bill three years ago. Time prevents me from reading it out, but it made the MSC legally responsible for checking. It meant that no scheme would have gone ahead unless the health and safety inspector and a trade union health and safety steward had seen the premises. In answer to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), may I say that had it become law instead of the Bill we are discussing tonight, no scheme would have gone ahead unless it was in a workplace approved by the trade unions. The hon. Gentleman may call it Victorian dogma. I call it saving the lives of 50 young kids and stopping the maiming of thousands more.

The Bill is riddled with attacks on the conditions of workers. A recent study in the Labour research department's bargaining report showed that particularly after the Bill is passed working conditions in Britain will become some of the worst in the EEC. If the Bill becomes law, it will be virtually impossible for workers to establish why they have been dismissed from jobs unless they have been employed for two years. It will make it much harder for trade unions to represent workers. Workers will be discouraged from challenging gaffers dismissing them, and it will be a sweetener and an encouragement of employers to dismiss workers on a whim. It is very bad news indeed for workers. If they are dismissed with no written reason of dismissal, under the most recent social security legislation they face a cut in unemployment benefit for up to 26 weeks.

The Secretary of State talked about industrial tribunals and the £150 pre-tribunal deposit. He said that that was a maximum and not necessarily a fixed amount. When I asked the Secretary of State for Social Security how many workers had lost social security for 26 weeks, he said, "I cannot tell you. We do not keep statistics." I know why the Department does not keep statistics. Virtually every case I have come across has been on the fixed level of 26 weeks. The pre-hearing assessment industrial tribunal deposit will be similar.

The Bill refers to the concept of freedom. The Secretary of State made an attempt sarcastically to list the current regulations affecting young workers. Those regulations restrict the starting time for young workers to no earlier than 7 am and the finishing time no later than 8 pm. They restrict the working day to nine hours, and limit weekend working and the total hours worked in a week to 54 hours.

Instead of removing them, if the Government had any respect, understanding or compassion for young workers, they would extend the rights of young workers or all workers and produce such measures as a maximum working week of 35 hours to share out employment, the elimination of systematic overtime and bringing retirement down to 55 for all workers so that, unlike me, some youngsters could grow up and see both their grandparents instead of seeing one die down a pit at 52 from lung disease without the chance of reaching a retirement age of 60 or 65.

The Secretary of State and some of his acolytes among the younger Tory Members seem, from their echoes of humour, to think that those are Victorian attitudes, but they have no concept of the causes of accidents and no understanding of what tiredness means. A standard ergonomics textbook, entitled "Fitting the Task to the Man", says:

> "Our physiological knowledge and present-day experience point to the conclusion that a working day of eight hours cannot be exceeded without detriment."

As my right hon. Friend the member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said, the evidence of the Health and Safety Executive to the Government in March last year said:

> "In relation to hours of work, a broad measure of control should be retained to safeguard young people's welfare and opportunities for their education and social development."

Those are difficult aims to achieve for young people if, through tiredness, they are maimed or dead.

I cannot view the attacks in the Bill in isolation from other similar measures. Time precludes me from talking about them in detail. No doubt by the time we get to Report the Government will table amendments for the abolition of the wages councils because the period of statutory, but superficial, consultation finishes on 3 February. We already know that 2·5 million workers—mainly women—on a few pounds either side of £80 a week face cuts in wages if the wages councils are abolished. In the past 10 years, more than 88,000 factories were found to be under-paying their workers under old and existing wages council settlements. How many were prosecuted? Only 56. This is the Government of law and order, but do they enforce existing laws? When they affect their mates, they abolish the laws and get away with under-payment.

The Bill is rife with such points. Clauses 1 to 7 deal with the repeal of what the Government call unnecessary obstacles to employment, particularly for women. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) will deal with that subject better than I, so I shall make only one point about it. The Government say that the rationale for clauses 1 to 7 is to comply with European Community legislation on sex discrimination, but there is an alternative. Instead of equalising down to comply with European legislation, they could equalise up and raise the rights of men to those of women where protective legislation has been deemed necessary in the past.

Time prevents me from examining properly all the issues. Tory Members may think that it is being kind or considerate to give 16 to 18-year-olds the freedom to work longer hours and the joys of unlimited overtime. They may be surprised to learn that young people do not see the matter in that way. The 16 to 18-year-olds are conscripted into the youth training scheme on pain of losing benefit. One lad in Coventry tried to join a YTS scheme for the

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

eight weeks before his 18th birthday at Christmas. He was turned down because every employer asked why they should take him when they could take on a 16-year-old for two years. He was told by the Department of Social Security to go to the Salvation Army hostel for eight weeks. So even when young people try to get on a scheme, the loss of benefit works against them.

The abolition of wages councils for under-21s has pressurised youth wages down, and the Bill will make their life harder. Shops will increase their use of part-time young workers, especially if the Government allow Sunday and late evening opening. Many employers will use the Bill to threaten the wages and job security of their permanent staff through substitution. National pay bargaining, which is anathema to the Secretary of State, will be further undermined and accidents will increase as the Government legislate to allow the bosses to get away, literally, with murder.

But pressure will also increase from another direction. The trade union and labour movements will campaign for decent training and safe working conditions for young workers and for minimum wages that reflect the cost of living—not the cost of existing. The Secretary of State should widen his reading on European matters and should ask his officials to make an analysis of the Spanish press during the past four weeks. On 14 December, inspired by the elan and enthusiasm of young workers, apprentices and school students in their campaign against training schemes which are modelled on the YTS, Spain was rocked by a general strike of millions of workers for the first time in 50 years. Politicians there said that it could never happen, as they have said here. *[Interruption.]* The Spanish Government are termed a Socialist Government.

One can stretch a piece of elastic only so far. This clutch of proposals on safety, training, hours and conditions of work may yet be the catalyst for a similar movement among young people in this country. I hope to fight the Bill line by line in the House, without any expectation of changing the minds of Tory Members who may serve on the Committee. Perhaps more important, I hope to spread the message outside the House about the draconian implications of the Bill and to warn workers, young and old, male and female, of the Government's absolute and sustained contempt for them.

9.25 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): When the Secretary of State opened the debate, he waxed quite lyrical about his commitment to equality for women. He recounted the number of women in the work force as if we did not know; he talked about the projected number of women in the work force in the 1990s, as if we did not know; he talked about the need to update legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as if we did not know; and he spoke of the need to sweep away prejudice and to open up opportunities for women, as if we did not know.

We have been saying all that for years. I have to remind the House that the Secretary of State abstained when the House voted on whether to give what became the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 a Second Reading. I do not know where he was, but his commitment to women was obviously not very great on that occasion.

I would have been impressed by what the Secretary of State said earlier if I did not know what was in the Bill. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said, the Bill provides a golden opportunity to grasp the nettle. I have never heard so many Conservative Members make speeches about the need to improve conditions for women. I am truly amazed. I have spoken from the Dispatch Box and from the Back Benches for many years and have been laughed at—as have been my colleagues—when I have spoken of the need to improve conditions.

Anybody who listened to the Secretary of State would think that he and the Government would tackle low pay, introduce universal child care, outlaw sexual harassment at work, provide proper and affordable transport, introduce decent maternity leave and maternity benefits and bring in parental leave. A combination of all those is needed. What do we have instead?

The Bill is split into four bits. The first apparently affects women, the second affects young people, the third affects employees and the fourth concerns training. I have news for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The whole Bill is about women—as employees, trainees, trade unionists and young workers. Even the clauses which seem to concern women alone will, in practice, affect the whole of the work force.

The Government are introducing a mixture of measures. Some they do not want to do but have been forced to do, and others they have always wanted to do but have not had the nerve to do before. They have, as usual, delayed acting on rulings made in Europe until they can delay no longer, and they have drowned the progressive aspects from Europe in a sea of ideas entirely of their own imagination.

I welcome the decision to repeal section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 insofar as it concerns employment and vocational training. It has been clear for a long time that it is ridiculous that women can be discriminated against by laws which predate 1975, but it has taken the Government until now to do something about it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said, the Government have been in office for 10 years. They could have acted before, but they have dragged their heels until Europe said, "Enough." Once again, the Government have done the very minimum. Why not repeal section 51 altogether? That is what a genuine commitment to ending discrimination entails—not the introduction of a new section 51A. What is the Minister's objection to the Equal Opportunities Commission's proposal of a full repeal of section 51 with limited exceptions reviewable every five years? After all, that is a sensible way forward.

I welcome the Government's acceptance of positive discrimination, by allowing the appointment of women to certain academic posts. I know that they do not call it positive discrimination, but it is that in all but name. It is designed to correct the under-representation of women. What a pity that the Government did not accept this principle when they outlawed contract compliance in last year's Local Government Act. The Government's commitment to the employment of women is confined to just four Oxbridge colleges, and I should like to know why.

A large amount of media and Chamber attention has been concentrated on the provision of the Bill that will allow women to go back down mines. I do not know whether the Secretary of State realises that on this issue

both the National Union of Mineworkers and British Coal are united. Neither wishes women to go down mines. Conditions in the mining industry have improved dramatically since the last century, and must be judged as either fit for women and men or not fit for anybody. For these improvements, no organisation deserves more praise than the NUM. For decades it has struggled against hostile Governments and employers to make the health and safety conditions as high as they can be in such a dangerous industry. The NUM and the Trades Union Congress have borne the brunt of the Government's decimation of our coal industry. They have first-hand experience of the Government's policies and have done more than anybody to offset them. That is why I listen to, and respect, their opposition to women returning underground. However, on balance, I disagree with them, provided that the conditions for women working underground are right.

Mr. Lofthouse: If it were possible, I would agree with my hon. Friend. However, after a lifetime in the industry, although I recognise the improvements that have been made, I know that it is still impractical, inhuman and indecent for women to work in coal mines. I hope that we shall never see that. I know that some Conservative Members say that it will never happen. I want to know the Government's motive for putting in this clause. The Bill comes in the lead-up to privatisation, and I wonder whether the motive for this clause is cheap labour for a privatised coal industry, if that should ever happen.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend has a point. He is an ex-miner and speaks with great experience. If the conditions below at the coal face are bad, I agree that women should not work down there, but neither should men. We should ensure that the conditions for men are right in such a way that women are enabled to take their place there if they so wish.

It is patronising to talk about women not being capable of working underground because they are not physically capable of doing the job, as some Conservative Members have done. They are physically capable of doing the job, so that suggestion is monstrous. I want to know what negotiations the Government have entered into with British Coal to ensure that conditions are right for women to go down the mines if they so wish.

Have the Secretary of State and his Department had discussions with British Coal—I understand that it is opposed to women going down the mines—to ensure that it provides proper changing rooms for women and that all the health and safety conditions are satisfied? Has the Secretary of State, who has made recent speeches about the need for employers to provide child care at the workplace, had discussions with British Coal about providing workplace nurseries at the pithead? The right hon. Gentleman should do such things before he comes to the House and talks as though it is an easy option, under present conditions, for women to go down the mines to work. We want to see opportunities available to women in traditional non-female employment, but the conditions, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) has said, must be right for men as well as for women. We would then be satisfied.

Women play a role in the mining industries of countries such as the United States and Sweden, and there is no reason why they should not do so here. British Coal must end its list of feeble protests and create the conditions to ensure that women can work in the mines.

Clause 16 will allow an industrial tribunal to charge a deposit of £150 before certain cases can proceed to a full hearing. A number of my hon. Friends have already referred to this. The tripartism of the pre-assessment hearing is to give way to Diplock-style "pre-hearing reviews" with just the chair hearing the case. When the Minister replies I hope that he will tell us what is wrong with the current procedure. When the Secretary of State discussed clause 16, he did not give the reasons behind the change.

Presently, costs can be awarded when the tribunal decides that a case is frivolous, vexatious or otherwise unreasonable. Therefore, why do we need the new provision? It has nothing to do with eliminating half-hearted complaints, but everything to do with reducing the incidence of those complaints. The simple truth is that many people will either be deterred from or just unable to afford to bring a case. Some 75 per cent. of cases heard by industrial tribunals relate to unfair dismissal claims. If a claimant is unemployed, how can she afford the deposit? In Committee, do Ministers plan to introduce any financial assistance for those on social security who wish to proceed with a claim? Are there any plans to introduce guidelines to assist the chair of the tribunal to decide what is a reasonable claim?

Equal pay and sex discrimination claims are already notoriously difficult to pursue. Will the Secretary of State draw up special guidance to assist in those cases? Above all, will the Secretary of State see to it that more women are appointed as chairs to industrial tribunals, because, presently, out of about 80, only about three are women?

The deposit of £150 is a logical complement to all the Government's actions during the past decade. First they got rid of as many rights as they could and now they dispense with the channel of complaint. That is a classic piece of totalitarianism by the back door.

The House should also note that clause 16(3) allows the Secretary of State to change the £150 deposit from time to time. The right hon. Gentleman's movements will be more akin to perpetual motion rather than time to time. The House should remember that it is only two and one half years since the Government in their document "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" suggested a fee of £25. Obviously, at this rate of increase, the fee will be more than £1,000 by the next general election. I suppose that that is what the Government want, because the more the price goes up, the fewer will be the people who will be able to afford to take cases to tribunal.

Most employer organisations did not care for the £25 charge, but a change to six times that figure has an appeal. Employers will be able to flout the law and each time they are summoned before a tribunal they will merely ask the complainant to place a deposit.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Ms. Richardson: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way; little time remains for the Front Bench closing speeches.

I come to the question of deregulation. The limiting of paid time off, the proposals on dismissal and disciplinary statements and the changes for industrial tribunals were all trailed in the document "Building Businesses . . . Not

[Ms. Richardson]

Barriers." I recall the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986, which was in part a result of the fundamental philosophy that underpinned the White Papers to which I have referred. In debating that measure, the Minister claimed time and again that he was ridding businesses of the burdens that were prohibiting the creation of jobs, and on each occasion we asked for proof to substantiate his claims.

The trouble was that neither the Minister nor his colleagues nor his civil servants could produce one small scrap of evidence to support his dogmatic assertion, for that is what it is—an almost ritualistic, parrot-like assertion to be repeated three times a day—and taken, as we always must take legislation introduced by the present Government, with a pinch of salt. Even the Government's own research paper, "Unfair Dismissal Law and Employment Practice in the 1980s" found

"very little sign that employment protection legislation was inhibiting industrial recovery or contributing to the high level of unemployment by discouraging employers from taking on new people."

I have recently received a copy of the response to the Bill by the British Institute of Management. It describes an October 1988 survey—so it is only three months old—of a representative sample of its 70,000 members which shows that only 11 per cent. thought there was too much employment protection legislation. That is a significant and telling figure.

We have reached the stage when many bodies, organisations and individuals feel that the Government's proposals are not the right way to go about it, and I could spend all night describing the evidence that is available to counter the claims being made by the Government. The Government are disregarding all advice that is offered to them.

This could have been a golden opportunity to introduce a Bill on employment, which would have tackled properly the whole question of women's low pay, their under-representation at all levels in the work force and in decision making, the whole field of child care—not just the question of workplace nurseries provided by employers but the wide provision that is required—and the outlawing of all discrimination. That would not have been costly because much of the discrimination is based simply on prejudice.

What an opportunity the Bill could have presented to a decent Government, who, unfortunately at present we do not have. The Bill will disadvantage young people, will deregulate across the board and, in so doing, will disadvantage women. I invite my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby in opposing it, and in Committee we shall fight it line by line.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): This has been a wide-ranging debate in which hon. Members have made a great number of suggestions about what might be added to the Bill. Some thoughtful speeches have been made, particularly by my hon. Friends the Members for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and others on topics touching almost the whole of our responsibilities in the Department of Employment.

The Bill is about the creation of opportunities for employment. It sets out to reduce discrimination, to remove restrictions and to help improve our training arrangements. Many of its provisions involve sorting out old legislation. Many of the individual provisions will have only small effects on their own, but collectively they will help to reduce the tangle of legislation governing employment. Any hon. Member who has read the consultative document that we issued in 1987 will have seen the necessity to examine all these issues. We have looked at every law and regulation affecting young people and women to discover which of them we still need. Our aim is to get rid of every one that we do not need.

The first group of clauses is all about discrimination against women in employment. Anyone who heard some of the Opposition speeches might have thought that few women were able to work in this country. The fact is that women are taking full advantage of the economic upturn. Since 1983 the number of women in paid work has increased by nearly 1,500,000. A higher proportion of women are active in the labour force in Britain than in any other country in the European Community except Denmark. I recognise that women are still under-represented in senior jobs and over-represented in less skilled ones. Only about 6 per cent. of senior managers are women, but I believe that that is changing. More women and girls are obtaining higher level skills and qualifications, and more are training for and working in occupations traditionally regarded as men's work.

The Government have an excellent record on equal opportunities for women. The growth of women's employment and the fact that this country is unique in the European Community in having lower unemployment among women than among men is evidence of that. On an EEC standardised basis—for those sceptical about our statistics—women's unemployment is 13·3 per cent. in the other countries of the Community and 7·4 per cent. in the United Kingdom—only a little over half that rate. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) thought that we should take lessons from our European partners, but I think that they can look to us in this matter.

This Bill takes the promotion of equal opportunities further. As I said, our record as a Government is already good. We have made many changes that help women—the removal of restrictions on women's hours of work, extending the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation to offshore employment, equalising retirement ages, and freeing single sex training from bureaucratic intervention. All Government Departments are committed to ensuring that all their policies avoid discrimination against women.

Clause 1 gives priority to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 over all other legislation except for specific provisions in employment and training, such as safety risks, that specifically affect women. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) pointed out that general protection is now given to all employees under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. So general protection for women, as for all other employees of all ages, is covered by that. Extra protection is no longer required, but specific extra protection for women—for instance, pregnant women—is retained in the Bill in clause 4 and schedule 1.

As was only to be expected, we heard a great deal today about women in mines——

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cope: There is little time, and the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) did not give way.

We have heard conditional support for this clause from the hon. Member for Barking, and I welcome that—it was more than we managed to get from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). Of course, all the usual conditions will apply, especially to the health and safety side——

Mr. Ashton *rose*——

Mr. Cope: Clause 7 and its attendant schedule 2 are not only about mines. They also give greater freedom——

Mr. Ashton: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cope: I shall not. I have a lot to say and little time in which to say it.

Clause 7 and schedule 2 also give greater freedom to women in cement and pottery works, in tin plate and textile factories and elsewhere. The Bill also removes anomalous restrictions on the employment of young people. There is a large and complex body of old legislation, and that is ineffective. It places an unnecessary administrative burden on employers and authorities alike. It hampers flexibility in business, not so much because of what it says but because people do not want to unravel it all to see what they can do. It inhibits jobs even when it does not affect the hours. Ninety per cent. of young people work fewer than 44 hours at present and will be totally unaffected. Of course, they could be required to work 48 hours and, as the House will know, in some cases they could be required to work up to 60 hours.

In view of what has been said in the debate I must emphasise what we are not doing. We are not removing or relaxing in any way the restrictions on the employment of children under the age of 16. We are retaining protection for young people by preventing them from working in betting shops, selling alcohol or working with dangerous machinery. We are not removing any of the provisions regarding health and safety which protect 16 to 18-year-olds and which the Health and Safety Commission said needed to be kept.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and some other hon. Members spoke about the tragic case of Derek Cain and the recent court case. As the hon. Member for Brightside said, the Department of Employment took over the legal responsibility from the Manpower Services Commission and became joined in the case. We are presently awaiting the written court judgment and I promise the House that we shall carefully review everything that arises from it. The safety regime in the YTS is quite different from the regime that existed in the YOP six years ago when that tragic case occurred.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Cope: I shall not give way because I want to finish. Since 1983 the regulations for trainees have had the full protection of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It is an absolute requirement now, but it was not in 1983, that before a contract is signed the managing agents must satisfy us on health and safety conditions. We have staff in every training agency region and an expert adviser, often an ex-factory inspector and two officers with qualifications from the Institute of Occupational Health. Every accident is reported and every fatal accident is immediately reported personally to Ministers.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Cope: No, I shall not give way because I have much to deal with.

The hon. Member for Brightside and others seem to think that the possible conversion of the training agency into what is known as a next-step executive agency weakens control. Ministerial control now is more direct than it was when the Manpower Services Commission existed. A next-step agency, if that is what happens to the training agency, will remain in the public sector, and its resources and policy framework will be set by us. It will still be accountable for its actions to Ministers and, through them, to Parliament.

I know that it is possible to misread the figures of YTS accidents. Independent research corroborates that YTS trainees do not have more accidents than other young people employed in the same type of job. Ninety-nine per cent. of trainees do not have an accident. Of course, we have tightened the definition of a major injury to include wrist and ankle fractures which were previously classified as minor injuries. That affects the figures. We also know that, because of the tighter control of YTS, there is a higher standard of accident reporting. I repeat that independent research has shown that young people on YTS are as safe as other young people.

I can tell the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that in the public expenditure White Paper the Health and Safety Commission has been given the resources that it asked for and that the number of inspectors is being increased. Of course every accident, whether on YTS or elsewhere, is one too many and we shall continue to do all that we can to prevent accidents. Many hon. Members have spoken about training, and I shall come to that in a moment.

Among several runners for the most misunderstood clause, clause 16—about deposits before industrial tribunal proceedings—appears to be the most misunderstood. In response to the point raised by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), I should point out that it is on a quite different basis from the £25 proposal. We are not talking, as some hon. Members appear to be, about a deposit being ordered for every case that goes to an industrial tribunal. In fact, the reverse is true; we expect deposits to be the exception and not the rule. Tribunals will have adequate powers to deal with the minority of people who abuse the system by bringing ill-founded claims.

Either party will be liable to pay a deposit if it appears to the tribunal chairman to be bringing or defending the case vexatiously, frivolously or otherwise unreasonably. The sum of £150 is the maximum deposit that may be ordered. In most cases, the level of the deposit, even when it is required, will be considerably below that.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Cope: I must get on.

We have been accused in the debate of neglecting our responsibilities for training. In fact, total Government expenditure on training has increased from less than £500 million per year in 1979 to £3,000 million per year now. That is a tremendous increase on any basis. Employers

[Mr. Cope]

have also been attacked, but we know that they spend £18 billion a year on training. Of course we want to increase their commitment to training.

There is only one small clause and some technical pages in the schedule which relate to training. Clause 18 provides a kind of legal epilogue to the work of the Manpower Services Commission, renamed the Training Commission under last year's Act. It had some excellent work to its credit, but as the House knows, it became impossible to continue with an arrangement for decision making when one of the parties concerned, the TUC, became mandated to oppose the commission's largest programme.

Hon. Members can try, as they have done this evening, to rewrite the history of the end of the Training Commission, but despite the last-minute pleas of the Leader of the Opposition and others—excluding the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)—the congress voted massively against ET, knowing the likely and, as my hon. Friend the member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said, inevitable consequences of that vote.

Of course, some unions and union leaders realise the importance of training and are prepared to act accordingly. We want to work with them but, much too often, whatever they say, unions act against training. We have seen this in the YTS, most recently in the Civil Service. We have seen it in ET and on some area manpower boards. The training of outsiders is regarded as potentially damaging to existing members, and trade unions can sometimes be as restrictive as any mediaeval guild. That is why, although we want unions interested in training to join employers on the training and enterprise councils, we will not give them an automatic place.

Labour Members have argued today both that the Bill does not go far enough and that it goes too far. I can understand the Labour party's distaste for the Bill. Labour Members like regulations; they are wedded to regulations. The exaltation of regulations is the unwritten clause of the Labour party's constitution. It is almost the stuff of the party's constitution. In its view, regulation is the staff of life and the prop of politics.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Cope: No, I will not. I can well understand the dislike of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues for the Bill. The Bill reduces the total weight of legislation in force because regulations are the enemy of job creation. It is essential to retain safeguards on health and safety and we have done that. Every regulation that is necessary makes it more important to get rid of those that are not. That is what the Bill does and why I commend it to the House.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Waddington (Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 190, Noes 290.

Division No. 29] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John

Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Alex Carlile.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter

Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 290, Noes 216.

Division No. 30] **[10.15pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*

Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Heathcote-Amory and Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Rating Reform (Scotland)

10.27 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1988, dated 28th November 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

I understand that it would be for the convenience of the House if we were to debate at the same time the second motion on the Order Paper:

That the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, dated 28th November 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: If the House agrees, so be it.

Mr. Lang: The revenue support grant order, the first of its kind, marks the final stage of the revenue support grant settlement for 1989-90, first details of which were announced by my right hon. Friend to the House on 27 July. As my right hon. Friend stated at that time, public expenditure provision for the coming financial year has been fixed at 8 per cent. more than provision in the current year, and 4·6 per cent. above authorities' adjusted budgets for this year. It includes full provision for the extra administrative costs of operating the community charge. The increase in aggregate Exchequer grant for next year is 5·5 per cent., but after making provision for specific grant payments, the increase in revenue support grant, over the level of rate support grant for the current year, is 9·8 per cent. That is the relevant point for tonight's debate and I shall return to it later.

The grant settlement is, of course, in respect of the first year in which domestic rates will be replaced, in Scotland, by the community charge. This leads us in turn to a simplification in the system of grant support to local authorities, and the ending of the old rate support grant with its three separate apportionments into needs and resources elements and domestic rate relief each of which then required regular adjustments in subsequent years. We shall, of course, have the legacy of the old system in the continuing need for rate support grant orders for some time, in respect of years up to 1988-89, but I am glad to say that the new revenue support grant arrangements will be simpler.

In the first place, I propose to have only one revenue support grant order a year, and that will be a fairly short document, like the one we are considering this evening, dealing only with the year ahead. The order sets out how much grant each local authority will be paid in the following year, and the report on the order describes how these figures are arrived at. Once approved, each authority's grant will be fixed and the authority can be certain of precisely how much it will receive. There will, in general, be no subsequent adjustments, either for the various technical reasons that have required adjustment in the past or in respect of grant penalties. The effect of the community charge will be to make councils much more responsive and accountable to their electorates for their spending levels and for that reason the Government feel able to abandon the system of grant penalties.

It is worth mentioning at this point the other significant change which will begin to make its impact on local government next year and that is the introduction of the competition provisions in the Local Government Act 1988. The effect of competition will be to make the local authority operations to which it applies more efficient and to reduce their costs. This will be so irrespective of whether the successful bidders for business are outside contractors or the authorities' own direct labour organisations. The introduction of the community charge and the new competition provisions should between them bring considerable benefits to local charge payers, both in respect of the payments required of them and of the services with which they are provided.

When my right hon. and learned Friend announced in July the terms of the revenue support grant settlement for next year, he said that, if councils were to keep their expenditure increases within the present level of inflation, there would be no reason for community charge levels next year to be higher than they would have been if councils had been required to raise the same amounts as domestic rates this year. We published figures at the time showing that that would mean, for most community charge payers, payments in the range £200 to £300. Last month, we published our detailed estimates of what, on this basis, each community charge ought to be next year.

The matter has been one of lively discussion since then and my right hon and learned Friend and I have been accused by local authorities of almost every crime in the book. May I say this evening that I do not withdraw a word of what we have said on this matter. Underlying our prognostications are a few simple facts. Local authorities have three main sources of income with which they finance their expenditure. These are non-domestic rates, grant and, from next April, the community charge.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In calculating the amount of revenue support grant, what estimate did the Government make of the number of people who will refuse to pay the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: The provision for non-payment is broadly similar to the provision that exists under domestic rates, although in that instance it is more a question of reliefs than of non-payment. Under the community charge, the reliefs and exemptions are likely to amount to about 2·3 per cent. compared with 6 per cent. of reliefs.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is it not the case that the Government have said to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities that the non-collection rate will be 5 per cent? Is it not also the case that everyone in local authorities and all others who make any reasonable judgment of the matter think that that is a gross under-estimate, and that the figure will be well in excess of 5 per cent? Local authorities will not, therefore, raise a substantial sum of money through the poll tax this year, as the Government expect.

Mr. Lang: The record of those who have estimated the success or failure of the various processes in preparation for the community charge is such that I think that our own figures are rather closer to reality than those of the others. The figure is broadly the same for shortfall, which is a total of around 7 per cent., as under the domestic rating system, and that includes reliefs and non-payment.

Under the provisions of the 1987 legislation——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I want to ask the Minister a simple question. What on earth has the level of the poll tax got to do with the Scottish Office? Was it not the case that, when the legislation was introduced, the Government argued that they introduced it to create a

situation in which the matter was between the local authorities and their electorate? What has it to do with the Scottish Office?

Mr. Lang: It will be such a matter. Accountability is one of the central underlying themes. But throughout last year we heard various Labour councillors and directors of finance estimating outlandish figures such as £529, which was the figure that the finance director of Glasgow estimated. Curiously enough, that estimate emerged in the middle of the local government elections. We have waited until the facts were available to us and then, on the basis of the facts that I am describing now, we have said what the level of community charge would need to be if there was no volume increase in spending by local authorities.

Under the 1987 legislation, authorities now know the inflation-related increase in their non-domestic rate income next year. They also know, subject to the agreement of the House this evening, their increase in grant income. The increase in revenue support grant for local authorities as a whole is 9·8 per cent. over the rate support grant first payable in respect of the present year. Many authorities will gain a much higher increase than that, and for the high-spending authorities that have incurred grant penalties this year, the actual increase in grant next year, by comparison with what they are receiving this year, will in some cases be very substantial.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): In view of what he has said about grant penalties, why does the Minister not, even now, write off all the penalties for last year? The Secretary of State for the Environment has said that he will not impose any penalties in the coming financial year simply to allow a better run into the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the systems are not the same. It is important to maintain downward pressure on local authority spending. That is why we made it clear at the outset that penalties would remain this year. The English have decided to close down their grant system. The effect of that is that there can be no adjustment, so they will not benefit, as we will, if authorities bring their spending into line, from grant adjustments of some £89 million.

All that is left for authorities to fix for themselves is the income that they can expect from community charges. It is absolutely clear, therefore, that if authorities propose to maintain the same volume of spending next year as they are planning this year, they ought to charge the level of community charge that my right hon. and learned Friend announced last month. If their charges are higher, the answer is simple—they are increasing the volume of their spending. Their electors are entitled to know that, and that is why we published our estimated figures when we did. As the House will see, the revenue support grant order is a very simple and straightforward document which simply sets out the amount of grant that we propose to pay to each authority. The basis on which these sums have been arrived at is set out in the report. This is in accordance with the provisions of schedule 4 of the 1987 Act.

First, an amount has been distributed among authorities on the basis of their assessed needs. This is a process akin to the distribution of the needs element of the present rate support grant, and the basis of distribution is to equalise for different per capita needs. The rest of the available grant is then distributed on a straightforward per capita basis. The result of this process is to increase substantially the share of grant going to some authorities by comparison with the present rate support grant arrangements, and correspondingly to reduce the share going to other authorities. There are various reasons for this, but the most notable is that under the old system an authority could actually gain grant by setting a high rate poundage. This encouraged overspending, so in our new grant arrangements it is of no benefit to a local authority to have a high non-domestic rate poundage.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister wil know that Cumnock and Doon Valley has been a responsible authority. At a meeting in Lugar, when the Secretary of State visited the area recently, he said that he would bend over backwards to assist Cumnock and Doon Valley because of the high level of unemployment, the poverty and the deprivation in the area. Why has assistance to the authority been reduced by £500,000? That is surely not bending over backwards to help.

Mr. Lang: I shall gladly look into the matter if the hon. Gentleman would like to give me details of his anxieties. The authority benefits from the safety net, both in terms of the district and as a district in Strathclyde region, to the extent of some £19 a head.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): How does the Minister respond to COSLA's assertion that safety-netting goes against accountability and that, if we really want to tackle accountability, we should try to direct the tapering device towards the individual?

Mr. Lang: Not since Saul set out for Tarsus has such a blinding flash of light led to such dramatic conversions to the principle of accountability such as we now hear from the Opposition. I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's question by saying exactly what I was about to say on safety-netting. The legislation provides that, having carried out the allocation process, the Secretary of State may then alter the resulting figures. That is the so-called safety-netting power. Its declared intention is to allow damping of swings in grant entitlement.

I understand the concern, but there is nothing new in this arrangement except that we are now starting to do away with it. I am glad to hear that there is a welcome for that from the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). For years past there have been arrangements to modify grant entitlement to moderate fluctuations in any one local authority from one year to the next. Last year, for example, in distributing the needs element of rate support grant, each authority was guaranteed a minimum increase of 4 per cent. over the present year, and that was financed by imposing a 10 per cent. limit on gains. Last year, the precise detail of the arrangement was suggested to us by COSLA in the course of a meeting that it had with my right hon. and learned Friend and myself.

So there is nothing new or unusual about that sort of arrangement. Indeed, it was a feature of the old grant system that, through the operation of the resources element, some high-spending authorities attracted more grant by virtue of their high rate poundages. The new arrangements for the distribution of revenue support grant will give no such advantage to high spenders. It is only now, under the greater transparency and accountability of

[Mr. Lang]

the new arrangements, that we can see more easily the unacceptable degree of cross-subsidy of the high spenders by the low spenders that has existed in the past.

The Green Paper on local government reform assumed that the cross-subsidy would be carried over 100 per cent. into the first year of the new system. Legislation was enacted against the background of that assumption and all illustrations of community charge levels that the Government have published until recently have been based on it. I take the view—I am glad that some Opposition Members agree with me—that it is unacceptable——

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: I would rather that the hon. Gentleman hear me out. When he has done so, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman will hear me out, I shall give way to him. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am willing to read *Hansard* and analyse what I said earlier, but I ask the Minister to respond to that which COSLA has said. I am willing to use my own phraseology. The Minister is prepared——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he is raising a matter for debate and not a matter on which the Chair can rule.

Mr. Douglas: It is all right——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Lang.

Mr. Lang: I am in the process of responding to the question of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) about COSLA. If he will bear with me, I shall give him the rest of the answer. The Green Paper on local government reform assumed that the cross-subsidy would be carried over 100 per cent. in the first year of the new system. The legislation was enacted against the background of that assumption. We take the view that it is unacceptable to continue with this situation for other than the short term. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I have taken steps to remove 38 per cent. of the cross-subsidy or safety net at once. We plan to withdraw the rest within the next three years or so.

We must recognise, however, that for community charge payers in some authorities, especially in Glasgow and Strathclyde, too sudden a change in the grant arrangements would have had dramatic consequences as we move to a completely new and fairer system. The safety net merely reflects temporarily, and on a declining basis, the advantage that some authorities had under the old grant system to enable such authorities to adapt.

The authorities that are most vociferous in their complaints about the temporary continuance of a cross-subsidy should reflect that they are the direct beneficiaries of the change to the new system of grant distribution that gets away from the resource element contribution. They are benefiting further from the already substantial phasing out of safety nets, and they are the recipients of the largest increase in grant under the new system. For example, the Borders region stands to gain 13·5 per cent. more next year than this, and the Grampian region 14·6 per cent. more—more than double the rise in the cost of living—and many districts are receiving still larger increases.

The Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order before us tonight, represents an extremely good deal for both local authorities and domestic taxpayers. Every regional and islands council is receiving a grant increase well in excess of the rate of inflation. Taken together with the sums of grant being returned to authorities in respect of earlier years, there is every reason to expect community charges to be set at moderate levels. I commend the orders to the House.

10.45 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I can understand why the Minister kept his head down and read every word of his dreary speech. If he had lifted his head and had happened to catch the eye of anyone on either side of the House, I doubt whether he could have kept a straight face. He would have broken into fits of laughter because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has said, he was talking nonsense.

Tonight we are debating for the first time the new grant arrangements under the poll tax legislation that the Government are imposing upon the Scottish people, despite almost total opposition to it. The levels of poll tax to be imposed will depend upon the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order and I intend to limit my remarks to that.

The Minister tried to imply that this is a simple matter. Of course the order is simple, because it is simply a list of figures representing what each local authority will receive. The idea that the process by which those figures have been arrived at is more simple than past methods is absolute nonsense. Consider the document put to COSLA by the Scottish Office about how the safety netting is arrived at, which stated:

"Column 28 is calculated as follows:

For an area with no safety net community charge (column 27) over £275, and with a no safety net charge (column 27) greater than the fully safety-netted charge (column 26), column 28 is the greater of £275 and column 26, its fully safety-netted charge,"

etc., etc.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): That is simple enough!

Mr. Maxton: Oh yes. If anyone believes that the method is simple and is anything other than gobbledegook, he is a con man. Perhaps that is exactly what the Secretary of State and the Minister are.

The Secretary of State and the Minister have tried to claim that the settlement is generous and that the levels of poll tax are much lower than we had estimated. The Minister made much play of that in his speech. He forgets that our objection to the poll tax is not the level imposed on any individual, but the fact that it is grossly unfair that the tax can be imposed on someone who is just above the low rebate scheme and that the same level of tax is imposed on the wealthiest in the land. That is our moral objection to the poll tax: no matter the level, the tax is grossly unfair.

I accept that the settlement under the poll tax is more generous than past settlements, but that is not saying a

great deal for it. Equally, that generosity does not stem from the Government's munificence to the Scottish people, but is part of cheap political opportunism and sheer accident.

The accident which increases the settlement to 9·8 per cent. is the £70 million that the Government, somehow or other, managed to con the Treasury into allowing them to keep. Normally they would have lost that money to the Treasury. The Secretary of State may smile, but I hope that he will be able to guarantee that that £70 million will not be clawed back by the Treasury next year, thus putting an extra burden on the Scottish poll tax payers.

The percentage of grant to relevant expenditure remains at 55·4 per cent., exactly the same as it was last year. It is worth saying again and again that, in 1979, the percentage of grant was 68·4 per cent. If that same figure of grant was being given by the Secretary of State today, the average poll tax in Scotland—based on the Secretary of State's formula—would be not £275 but £180.

Mr. Lang: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will extend his arithmetic and say what it would be if the level had not been reduced from 75 per cent. to 68·5 per cent. by the last Labour Administration.

Mr. Maxton: Nobody has denied that it was reduced by the last Labour Government, but the massive major reduction in grant has occurred under the Tories. The hon. Gentleman should admit that. It is his problem. The Conservatives have been in power for 10 years and he must accept responsibility for what they have done.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Perhaps my hon. Friend should remind the Minister that the rate support grant level was at 75 per cent. to compensate local authorities in Scotland for the reorganisation of local government imposed on them by the outgoing Conservative Government, who left the Labour Administration to pick up the tab. It was always understood that it would be reduced to 68·5 per cent.

Mr Maxton: My hon. Friend has explained the position as fully as I would have expected him to do. This is not a particularly generous settlement, so let us not get carried away into believing that the Minister is a late phoney Father Christmas.

Grant is given against the relevant expenditure figure that the Secretary of State claims each Scottish local authority should spend next year. If that figure is wrong, then so is the grant less generous than would appear to be the case. On the surface, as the Minister has tried to claim, there appears to be an increase of 8 per cent. in the level of relevant expenditure. But against this year's adjusted budgets it is only 4·3 per cent., and that is well below the level of inflation as estimated by the Government. It includes—but the Minister did not mention this—an extra £13 million for the implementation and administration of the poll tax, an admission that the Government got it wrong in terms of the cost of the poll tax all along.

If local authorities cannot live within that 4·3 per cent. increase—which, as I say, is well below the estimated rate of inflation and almost certainly well below the local government rate of inflation—the poll tax figures will be well above the guesses put out by the Secretary of State. It is difficult to see how local authorities will be able to maintain existing services within that figure, let alone meet the new burdens that have been placed on them—the revised staffing standards in schools, the introduction of school boards, the development of compulsory tendering and the pay awards for police and fire services that, as we know, will be well above 4·3 per cent.

When loan and interest charges are added, the total level of expenditure supported by grant is £4,505 million. But the sum for loan charges is based on an interest rate of 10·2 per cent. and no hon. Member believes that that is remotely realistic in the present economic climate. The Minister must give a guarantee to the House now that he will bring forward variation orders to take account of the changes in interest rates that have been imposed by the Government in recent months. If he fails to do that, the poll tax payer will again have to carry that burden.

The Government are arriving at their estimated poll tax figures assuming that exemptions and non-collections will be the same as for rates. Nobody, apart from the occupants of the Government Front Bench, believes that to be true. Everybody believes that the level of poll tax non-payment and the problems of collection will be so much greater that the poll tax figures for those who can and will pay will be that much higher.

I accept that if the Government had continued the trend since 1979 and reduced the support grant yet again, and if the safety net system based on the unrealistic £275 Scottish average had not been introduced, the poll tax in many authorities, particularly in the west of Scotland, would have been much higher. For instance, but for the safety net, the combined Glasgow and Strathclyde rate would have been £55 more than it will be. The deliberate depressing of the poll tax figures is not an attempt by the Government to be generous to the poll tax payers of Glasgow and Strathclyde; it is a desperate attempt to reduce the political outcry on 1 April when the poll tax bills go out.

Mr. Douglas: This is governmental corruption.

Mr. Maxton: That is why my hon. Friend speaks in such terms, although I perhaps would not; but he is right. This is an attempt to hide the great hatred for the poll tax in Scotland. At long last the Government seem to have realised that the poll tax is deeply unpopular among the vast majority of Scottish people. Knowing that they will have to take full responsibility for the tax and the level at which it is set this year, they have attempted to reduce its impact by these devious means.

I assume that over the next few years the Government will resume their reductions in grant to local authorities. The Minister has already said that they intend to run down the safety net procedures. By doing that they hope that the resultant increase in the poll tax will be blamed on what they call spendthrift Labour-controlled authorities, not on the Government.

Let us examine the safety net procedures. Non-domestic rates are now paid into a common pool and redistributed on a per capita basis to local authorities. That means that authorities such as Strathclyde and Glasgow, with high levels of non-domestic subjects and high domestic rate poundages, contribute more, and authorities with low levels gain.

So the Government decided in their wisdom, against the advice of COSLA, to ensure that the enormous disparities that this would create should be compensated for by a safety net. But this safety net does not help the poorer, as opposed to the richer, poll tax payer—as it

[Mr. Maxton]

should. It helps all local authorities and all poll tax payers in individual poll tax areas. Moreover, the safety net makes a complete mockery of the whole Government case for the poll tax. That case is all about accountability. We have heard time and again—and again from the Minister tonight—that the poll tax is about accountability. We heard that on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report and Third Reading of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill. Local authorities were to be made accountable for what they did. Now, under the sham that the Government have introduced, Strathclyde and Glasgow will not be accountable this year for the sums that they will raise in poll tax. *[Laughter.]* The Government have destroyed their own case, and all they can do is laugh.

There will be no accountability in Strathclyde and Glasgow because the local authorities there have not decided the level of the poll tax: the Government have. Accountability goes out the window as a result of this order. The fact that the Government have felt it necessary to introduce it illustrates the sorry mess of the new system. Something had to be done; otherwise the Strathclyde ratepayers, particularly the poorer ones, would have had to pay much more.

Under the crazy scheme that the Government came up with, Sutherland district council would have received £30 for every poll tax payer in its area. There would have been no district poll tax payment by the council. It would have been able to reduce the regional poll tax by £30, too. How absurd! As the poll tax is phased out, so accountability disappears. Glasgow, Strathclyde and other local authorities will have to increase their poll taxes merely to stand still. Even if they reduce their expenditure or maintain it at the same level, their poll taxes will inevitably rise. *[Laughter.]* The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is the architect, the evil mind, behind this whole ridiculous affair, is laughing. He knows that is what he has wanted all along.

Strathclyde has reduced expenditure but the poll tax will go up in every one of the local authority areas that benefited this time. However, those who have lost this year will find that they can both increase expenditure and reduce their poll tax at the same time. Where then is the accountability? I thought that this was supposed to stop local authorities from overspending, from increasing their expenditure. Authorities that keep expenditure at the same level will be penalised and those that increase it may well find that they will be all right.

This is an unfair system and makes nonsense of the case for local accountability. The settlement has little to do with the real needs of the people of Scotland or with the services that local government provides. It has all to do with the desperate political plight of the Secretary of State and his party. They know that they are in deep trouble over the poll tax and that the people of Scotland do not want it. Luckily, the people of Scotland are not stupid. Since 1979 they have shown that they know where to put the blame in local government matters. In election after election they have rejected the Conservatives and will continue to do so despite transparent misuses of political power such as this.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members want to participate in the debate. Therefore, I appeal for brevity. I hope that the House will respond to my appeal so that I can call all those concerned.

11.1 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Much of what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said was clearly predictable. It seemed that he had some difficulty in complaining about the details of the settlement and the orders that are before the House. I listened with particular interest to what he said about safety nets in Glasgow because I shall be a community charge payer in Glasgow. He delivered his speech with a great deal of verve and enthusiasm, but at the end of it I was wholly unclear about whether he and his party were in favour of the safety net provisions. As he represents Cathcart, he should have made it unequivocally clear that in the context of the new system the safety net provisions are sensible. I shall come back to that.

I emphasise that this is clearly a generous settlement with an increase of 9·8 per cent. in total grant. The grudging comments from the hon. Member for Cathcart were just about as near to a recognition of that as the Opposition will dare to go. The hon. Gentleman gave the impression that safety nets were a new concept and that somehow they had been introduced because of particular problems that had arisen at the last minute over the introduction of the community charge system. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If one goes back not to the Bill or the White Paper but to the original consultation document, the Green Paper, one sees that on page 64 it says:

"to move directly to the new grant arrangements would entail unacceptable disruption".

That is why there will be safey net provisions. There is nothing at all new about the introduction of safety net provisions for the first few years of the community charge system.

Mr. Douglas: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman but I am conscious of what you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have said about the amount of time available.

The settlement has evoked different reactions from different authorities. Perhaps unusually, I should like to congratulate Strathclyde regional council on its provisional budget because it has come out to within one pound of the Scottish Office estimates which are constantly derided and abused by the Labour party as being wholly unrealistic, fatuous and wrong. They were certainly not so in the case of Scotland's largest and overwhelmingly Labour-controlled local authority.

Of course, there have been different reactions elsewhere. The Lothian reaction has been to take the figures out of thin air and constantly revise them. We have heard the complaints from Borders and Grampian about safety nets, but it is worth emphasising that, after the safety net provisions, the grant increase for Grampian is 14·6 per cent. and for Borders 13·5 per cent. I do not know what is happening about the Grampian budget. No one appears to know what is happening about the administration of the Grampian region these days. Perhaps the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) or the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) can tell us whether there is still an administration. However,

we know that Borders appears to be intending to increase its expenditure by over 11 per cent. in the forthcoming year. That is a quite unreasonable increase and puts into context the complaints about the grant system that have emanated from that area.

You have asked hon. Members to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker. I therefore conclude by saying that the grant settlement is a fair and reasonable settlement. It was important that the Government obtain a just settlement for the introduction of the new community charge system. All the evidence is that the system is going ahead and will be implemented. The campaigns of non-payment and registration about which we have heard so much from Labour Members will clearly be a complete and utter failure.

11.6 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): If it were not for the fact that I sought to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, on a specific point involving my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith)—it is an immediate problem concerning Strathkelvin district council—it would be tempting to enter into the mainstream debate.

The Secretary of State might recall that I was present at several meetings in another capacity when rate support grant settlements were debated. Hon. Members see a colossal amount of Government interference in local government matters which are not for the Government at all. There is more than a degree of unreality when we see clearly—COSLA has not been mentioned very often, although the Government have a statutory duty to consult it—that the inflation rate, for example, is well above the 4·3 per cent. that the order recognises.

We also see that, although the Government are forced to recognise the reality of increasing public expenditure, for example, in the Department of Social Security, they are pouring money into private residential homes which have arisen as a result of the strain on the health services. The Government do not recognise that those same strains apply to the social work departments of Scottish local government.

May I turn briefly to the specific problems of Strathkelvin district to which I referred. My concern is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden and is known to the Minister. I thank the Minister and his staff for the attention that they have given to the matter. There has been a error in the calculation of the Strathkelvin rate support grant settlement. That is rather serious, because Strathkelvin district council will be underpaid by between £300,000 and £350,000 in 1989-90. The situation has arisen as a result of an incorrect figure supplied to the Department by the regional council in connection with non-domestic rating in the next financial year. As a result, the grant was calculated based on Strathkelvin receiving £2·731 million from non-domestic rates in 1989-90. The actual figure available is £2·273 million. I understand that the Scottish Office has told Strathkelvin that, although a recalculation cannot be made immediately, it has agreed that the amount underpaid will be recalculated during December 1989 and will be repaid then.

I invite the Minister to confirm the figures for the record, if only because Strathkelvin is concerned about its budget. When does the Minister think that any payment might be made? I hope that I will not sound churlish when I state that I recall on a previous occasion, when something similar happened to Monklands district council, my distinguished predecessor, the late Jimmy Dempsey, advocated the need for adjustments. The Government did meet his request in due course, but only after several years, and they did not meet the full amount. I hope that Strathkelvin will not endure the same experience.

11.10 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I have noted your comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I promise to be brief.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) clearly finds it difficult to suggest that there should not have been a safety net when there is a 9·8 per cent. increase. He suggests that there is something odd in having a safety net, but he knows full well that cushioning is essential in any transition period. I can only speak for myself in these matters, but I believe that my view reflects Government policy. I have stood at all elections on a platform of prudent Government expenditure and the control of Government expenditure and the reduction of taxes. I do not apologise for that.

The present position, with the community charge pending, is very interesting. Tayside regional council has been sending out a delightful blue form. I wonder about the legality of a form from a body that has been set up by statute and which operates under statute. That body is sending out forms carrying references to a tax that does not exist. The forms have been about the poll tax. There is no poll tax, and I believe that the forms are probably therefore illegal. It will be intesting to see what the local authority auditors say about that.

It was also interesting to note that the Scottish National party in Angus is not adopting the policies—as we understand them—of non-co-operation and non-payment of the community charge because it is actively collecting it. More importantly, the SNP provost of Perth and Kinross, Alex Murray, has stated publicly on more than one occasion that the SNP policy is not to break the law. It seems that again we have the humbug and hypocrisy to which we have grown accustomed from that quarter.

It seems that those who are in office and have responsibility behave properly and responsibly. Those who have little hope of ever gaining office behave irresponsibly—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should not laugh. They aspire to office but have little hope of achieving it. They should think very carefully about their attitudes in this matter. My advice to them is that this is a unitary Parliament. They should not be associated with the funny lot who represent the Scottish National party. Their views are quite clear. They are out to destroy the link that Scotland has with this place. Labour Members have a different view and I hope that they will adopt the view that one day they might be in government.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that I will not associate myself with the Scottish National party in Tayside, which recommended that those who pay the poll tax promptly should be given a discount by Tayside regional council.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman and I find the antics of the Scottish National party on Tayside amusing. We have witnessed the activities of the SNP and its so-called

[Mr. Walker]

leaders and the actions of the tiny minority of its representation in this Parliament. We have also seen the activities of those in the Angus and Tayside regions. The hon. Gentleman and I look at those people, and we both realise what a bunch of hypocrites they are and what humbug comes from that quarter.

11.14 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): The Minister indicated that the rate support grant measure makes provision for increases of grant to Scottish local authorities, which total £19·8 million and refer to the five financial years 1984 to 1987-88. The Government will probably take it as evidence of the success of their policy of forcing reductions in local government spending that they are able to return that sum to Scotland's hard-pressed rate and poll tax payers. However, any impression of success is bogus, because the Government's own information shows that between 1975 and 1980, the average domestic rates bill in Scotland fell by 17 per cent. Since 1979-80, when the Tories dashed in on their white charger to rescue the domestic ratepayer, Scotland's average domestic rates bill increased by 81 per cent.

As to the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, some may have hoped that one small benefit of poll tax would be that the system for calculating central Government support to local authorities would be made easier to understand. The Minister says that it is simpler, but he is wrong, because that is far from the case. The revenue support grant system is just as complicated, arcane and fundamentally irrational as the rate support grant that it replaces.

The first point to be made about calculating expenditure needs, which underlines the order, is that the new system perpetuates the false and unrealistic assumptions the Government have made over the past nine years about the money required to maintain local government services in Scotland at a tolerable level. Some like to pretend that the Government's estimate of expenditure needs is lower than local authority budgets because local authorities are profligate. Let us look at areas when the Government consider that local authority expenditure is excessive.

In the financial year now drawing to a close, the Government consider that Scottish local authorities, regional and island councils, should have spent about £100 million less than they did on education. The Government wanted £28 million less spent on social work—on providing for the elderly, dealing with the needs of children at risk, and of the physically and mentally handicapped, coping with the menace of AIDS, and combating the drugs problem. Those are all social work responsibilities, on which the Government want less money to be spent.

The Government also wanted £5 million less spent on the fire service, a reduced amount for school crossing patrols, and £7 million less on roads and road lighting. They wanted £1·3 million less spent on sheltered workshops for the mentally and physically handicapped and the disabled, and £1 million less on registering electors. And so it goes on and on.

Over the past nine years, the Government's policy has been to transfer burdens from the Treasury to local authorities. It is a particularly pernicious policy with the move from rating, with all its drawbacks and disadvantages, to poll tax—with its central disadvantage that everybody who is not entitled to rebate pays exactly the same, regardless of their means. It is thus a transfer of tax burdens from a graduated system of taxation to a flat-rate system, and—as we have said often enough in the House—a deliberate exercise of unfairness.

I am disappointed that the Government have still done nothing about business rates. There are huge discrepancies in different parts of Scotland, to say nothing of the United Kingdom. As I think the Minister knows, in my own constituency, Argyll and Bute district council has expressed deep concern about the possible non-implementation of the uniform business rate. The council considers that any failure to arrange a single rate and harmonised valuations would have a devastating effect on its fragile economy, which depends considerably on tourism. I understand that the Minister is to make a keynote speech on 27 January. If he is going to say anything significant about business rates, I would have preferred him to do so on the Floor of the House rather than at a conference later in the month.

By continuing to fiddle with the level of revenue support grant and thereby with that of the poll tax, the Government have demonstrated that, in the new system as much as in the old, the most important determinant will be not the spending needs of local authorities but the whims of central Government in manipulating the grant. I believe that these proposals are fundamentally flawed.

11.21 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I endorse the criticisms by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). It is important that the debate should not be about individual council settlements. However, I want to refer particularly to my own council, which has suffered significantly.

The Secretary of State has so manipulated revenue support grant as to deny much-needed support to one authority in order to give it to another. That has been done against the best advice of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which has rightly criticised it. I should like the Minister to comment on COSLA's advice and to say why he felt it necessary to reject it.

East Kilbride district council, having been, as I say, particularly badly affected, has, I know, expressed its extreme concern in a letter to the Minister. Over the years, the council has had a reputation as a responsible local authority: it has never been criticised by Ministers for being irresponsible or a high spender, or for acting "out of synch" with the interests of ratepayers and the community that it represents. Traditionally it has been among the three lowest-rating councils in Strathclyde region. But, owing to reasons largely outwith its control and over which it has no influence, it is heading for a personal poll tax of about £99 per head. That will be among the highest poll tax charges—possibly the highest—in Scotland's district councils.

As the Minister will know, as part of the Government's proposals for the distribution of revenue support grant among local authorities, East Kilbride was classified as a benchmark district authority. Accordingly, the district council is to receive no proportion of grant for expenditure needs. Consequently, poll tax payers will lose to the extent of £8 per head of support grant.

The unwanted safety-netting procedures that the Government have imposed will result in a further loss of support amounting to £12 per head of population. That represents an overall loss of grant to East Kilbride district council of 91·3 per cent. In both money and real terms, the district council will receive only £107,000 in revenue support grant compared with £1·3 million for the current year. That is the effect of these orders on East Kilbride district council.

I understand that Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council is to suffer a loss of grant amounting to 27 per cent. —a significant loss, but it has to be set against East Kilbride's loss of 91·3 per cent. There can be no justification whatsoever for such a punitive measure being taken against East Kilbride. It has always acted responsibly over the years.

The district council's main concern relates to the basic figures, which generate a likely base community charge of about £85·1 per head, before any contingency and growth items are taken into account. That has to be compared with the Government's suggested figure of £76 or £77 per head.

I remind the Minister of the letter he received from the East Kilbride district council requesting a meeting. I ask the Minister to agree to that meeting and to listen to the council's detailed arguments. I seek a further assurance from the Minister that the revenue support grant assessment, which has worked so punitively against East Kilbride in all aspects, will be reviewed in the light of outturn information on rate products, community charge yields—and other relevant data.

11.26 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The order forms part of a political fraud. I use those words carefully. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred to the differences over terminology. He prefers to call the poll tax the community charge.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is the legal definition.

Mr. Douglas: All right, but if it is a charge it should be used to provide local authority services.

Is any hon. Member prepared to say that the services provided by local authorities in Fife are in any way inferior to those provided in Strathclyde—or that they are superior? Having thought of a figure—about £275—the Government asked themselves how they could cook the books so that that figure could be applied throughout Scotland.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) sits there smirking. He should re-read his speech of 9 December 1986 when he spoke about accountability. This proposal flies in the face of accountability. His speech in that Second Reading debate bears re-reading. It was made by a Member who never thought that he would be the Minister running the Scottish Office. Many hon. Members know that he is the man running the Scottish Office. The Secretary of State is not here, but we know that the hon. Member for Stirling is the real guy running the Scottish Office.

The orders fly in the face of accountability. This is a transitional arrangement in advance of the regional council elections which it is hoped will placate public opinion. If we really want to talk about the imposition of a tax, we should consider how we got into this mess in the first place and the measures that the Tory Government took to provide transitional arrangements for the domestic ratepayer. They did not say that there should be safety netting for the regions but for the individual ratepayer. Why do we not have the same provision now? The answer is that it does not suit them.

The Minister has tried to put words into my mouth in relation to the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities. COSLA is opposed to safety netting per se. However, if there is to be safety netting, it should be for individual ratepayers and it should be related to ability to pay. Despite all the obfuscation over the minimum level of rebate, the tax will be a heavy burden on those least able to pay.

I have received letters from the chief executive of Fife district council about what might be expected from the revenue obtained from the poll tax. We know that the downturn in rates is less than 1 per cent. A prudent authority in Fife will calculate the downturn in revenue expected from the poll tax as between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. If we find ourselves in that position, we have made a farce of accountability and local government finance.

It was hurtful for the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), with his knowledge of the aircraft industry, to talk about prudent local government services. The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) is sitting in a somnolent position. A tragedy occurred in his constituency and the people performing vital public services never asked about ability to pay. No one made the repulsive statement that the Prime Minister made in relation to the good samaritan-that he only provided his services because the person he helped had the ability to pay.

Vital public services must continue to exist and should not relate to ability to pay. Those services are important and are what the Labour party stands for. When we cease to stand for good public services, we cease to be a Socialist party and should not receive the support of the Scottish people. The Scottish people know what the Tories represent. They rejected them in 1987 and will continue to reject them.

11.33 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): We are saying goodbye to the rate support grant system and hello to the revenue support grant system. The old and vastly complicated rate support grant was driven beyond the limits of toleration by Governments determined to use it for purposes for which it was never intended and as part of their battle to do down local authorities. I have the feeling that the revenue support grant will be just as complicated and misused. Already, before its implementation, we are seeing complications, adjustments and anomalies. I predict—it is easy to do so—that the new system will quickly adopt the flaws and inadequacies of the old.

When I was a local government councillor I could see at first hand the treatment meted out by the Government to local authorities. Now I am operating at the other end of the spectrum and the view is just the same. Local authorities are crucial to the economic well-being of Scotland in the daily provision of basic services. However, local authorities have never been properly financed or

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

allowed the autonomy necessary to enable them to get on with the job of providing services without hindrance. The orders simply confirm that.

Central Government have never considered local government as a complete entity. When finance was reformed, the structure and status of local authorities were simply ignored. Now the Conservatives are apparently planning to take yet another short at structural changes which, no doubt, certainly on past form, will totally ignore the necessary finance and status required to produce a better local government system.

It is easy to pick out individual anomalies in the orders which, financially, will disadvantage some local authorities to favour others. I do not intend to pick out particular examples. It would be all too easy to bemoan the transfer of resources from other regions to Strathclyde region, but to do so would play the Government's no doubt intended divide and rule game. It would miss the fundamental point that it should be a question not of robbing one regional council to pay another, but of ensuring that the extra resources required to fund every region and district are supplied.

Is it true that, as COSLA states, an estimated £100 million of essential expenditure has been ignored by the Secretary of State in these orders? If extra cash is required to finance essential services, surely it is up to central Government to play their part in ensuring that the services and duties they place on local authorities are properly and adequately financed.

In introducing the new system of revenue support grant, will the Secretary of State address the points raised by COSLA? Why has an increase of only 4·3 per cent. been allowed for when the RPI has risen by 6 per cent.? At the very time when, as a consequence of school boards, competitive tendering, higher police and fire pay awards and new staffing standards in schools, new burdens have to be met by local authorities, what allowance have the Government made for the RPI increases? The 10·2 per cent. allowed for loan repayment interest looks vastly optimistic as the Government's economic policy is committed to higher interest rates. We seek an assurance that extra cash will be made available to meet further increases in interest rates over and above the 10·2 per cent. allowed for; otherwise services will suffer and the people of Scotland will lose by that system.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is committed to ever higher interest rates which are hammering Scots industry, small businesses, agriculture and fishing. Now it appears that, because of these orders, local government taxpayers will also suffer.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Hurry up; enthuse us.

Mr. Welsh: I would find it difficult to enthuse the hon. Gentleman, given his record on the subject.

The Secretary of State continually made the claim of high spending by local authorities. We heard it again tonight from the Minister. In terms of volume, local government expenditure has not changed since 1979, yet local authorities are being forced to take on additional responsibilities. Government propaganda is saying one thing, but the reality is quite different. It is reasonable for us to ask why there is no grant penalty in England and Wales in the year preceding the introduction of the poll tax and why Scotland is not receiving similar treatment.

COSLA is rightly concerned about finance and the whole future of Scottish local government. I share its concern. I ask the Minister to understand why councils and local authorities feel that way. I ask the Minister to answer the specific questions posed by COSLA on behalf of its member councils. COSLA is worried because ultimately local authorities have to supply services to their customers which we take for granted, yet they are not being adequately financed to do so. Councils should be helped financially and not hindered, which is precisely what the Government are doing.

11.38 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I shall be very brief as I should have liked to say some of the things that have already been mentioned. As the debate has progressed, the smiles have disappeared from the faces of Ministers on the Government Front Bench. In all the debates in the House in which I have taken part for the past quarter century, I have never seen a Government get such a thrashing as they have on the whole principle of the revenue support grant that they are presenting tonight.

Listening to the debate I was reminded of the story of the little boy who was leaving a village. As he was leaving he said, "Cheerio God, I'm going away to live in another village." The presentation that the Government are making is, "Cheerio rates, we have now gone over to the poll tax." I have never heard a more unconvincing explanation of why we should do it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was on to a good point when he talked about the safety net. There was no possibility of the Government being able to respond to the question of the safety net, as was shown in one of the most disgraceful episodes in Parliament—I am referring to the Mates amendment. That was based on the ability to pay, but what happened? The whole House was incensed by the fact that ability to pay would not be considered for the poll tax and we had the disgraceful situation in the other place in which Members were wheeled in—although they did not even know that the House of Lords existed—to defeat the equivalent of the Mates amendment. So there was no question of a safety net for the individual.

The financial burdens with which people are being confronted today are nothing to smile about. Already this month, the financial burden of the average family has increased by about £50 a month. As time goes on, as a consequence of the increase in mortgage payments and the terrific strain on social services, problems will fall on the backs of local government. Where in the Government's proposals can one find any contingency plan to take care of that?

The Minister made two specific points about the statement from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. I do not want to repeat them, because he spelt them out in detail, but one noted that the figure of 4·3 per cent. was mentioned when we know that the retail price index is running at 6 per cent. at the moment. No hon. Member would be boastful enough to say that interest rates will remain stable. Increased interest rates are a

burden that will fall eventually on local government. The Minister also dealt with the question of 10·2 per cent. for next year.

In his opening speech, the Minister dealt with the COSLA document in a hilarious manner and treated this thoughtful document, which we should be debating in detail tonight, as something that was not worth considering. I wish that we had more time to debate the points put by COSLA. The Government are obliged to answer in their defence the points made by COSLA about their proposals. It is a sham debate when we do not have sufficient time to deal with all the points in the COSLA critique of the Government's proposals.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The hon. Gentleman could have had twice as long if he had wanted it.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) does not know what she is talking about.

Yesterday, a resolution was passed by Lothian regional council which said:

"That the Council expresses its concern to the Scottish Office that documents and statements from the Scottish Office indicate a disturbing lack of understanding of many aspects of the present and proposed systems of local government finance; in particular, Council:

(1) reaffirms that it fulfilled its commitment to reduce its budget by £23 million and calls on the Secretary of State to withdraw his unjustified statement that Lothian had promised to reduce its expenditure (not its budget) by £23 million;

(2) calls on the Scottish Office to withdraw its list of estimated poll tax figures because of errors in the calculations, such as ignoring the effect of Councils' deficits or credit balances and giving the wrong figures for legal non-payers;

(3) calls on the Scottish Office to revise its method of apportioning Expenditure Need for items such as concessionary travel and nursery education; and

(4) calls on the Scottish Office to abandon the Safety Net provisions, for which there are no logical justifications and which destroy the elements of fairness and accountability claimed for the Government's tax system."

Some of these points have already been made, but I felt it right that the resolution passed by Lothian regional council should be put on the record. I hope that the Minister will answer our questions.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Am I not right in thinking that, if Scottish Ministers had wanted three hours of debate, they could have had it, but some of them were here at the beginning of the debate and decided not to have three hours?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that all hon. Members who are now in the Chamber have been here throughout the debate.

11.45 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): If the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) had been here throughout the debate——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I have.

Mr. McAllion: If the hon. Lady had been here from the beginning of the debate, she would have realised how unable Conservative Members have been to sustain their argument. Indeed, only two Conservative Back Benchers have been prepared to speak.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that Conservative Members made short speeches because we were asked to be brief and because we thought that it would be helpful to the Opposition to enable as many hon. Members as possible to speak?

Mr. McAllion: I am not complaining about the brevity of Conservative speeches, but about their scarcity. The fact that the Government can muster only two Back Benchers to speak shows the weakness of their case.

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is gesticulating, made the rash statement that this is a generous settlement. Such an inaccurate statement can only be the result of his ignorance and the complexity of the way in which the settlement was arrived at. I have spoken to the convenor of finance for Tayside regional council and the director of finance for Dundee district council, and both confirm that the councils are receiving less grant than they expected. I suppose, as has already been said, that, the hon. Member for Eastwood can be excused on grounds of diminished responsibility, if nothing else.

We are dealing with the first order made under a new system of local government finance for Scotland. The new system is being tested on the people of Scotland. I say that advisedly. We are dealing with something that can only be described as an experiment. Unfortunately, we have a mad scientist who masquerades as the Prime Minister of Scotland and who has a habit of carrying out experiments. Rashly, she at one time promised to abolish the rating system. She considers herself a conviction politician and is determined to see the thing through, but she needs to see how she can deliver what she promised.

The Prime Minister realised that the trouble with experiments is that they sometimes go wrong, so she had to find a part of the United Kingdom where it would not matter to the Tories if things went wrong. Scotland is such an area. The Tories are already doing so badly there that it is difficult to see how they could do much worse. That is the conclusion that the Prime Minister reached. It might not suit 10 Conservative Members, but that does not matter—the Prime Minister does not care what they think. She knows that she can stay in office without their votes, and she is quite prepared to sacrifice them on the altar of the poll tax which she thinks will deliver votes in the south of England.

If we look for evidence which suggests that the poll tax system will work, we look in vain. The Minister promised us that a register of poll tax payers would be available for public inspection on 1 October, but there is still none. In the meantime, authorities have been burdened with extra expenditure on the buildings and staff needed to administer the poll tax in Scotland. The arguments about increased accountability which the Minister advanced have now been contradicted by the safety net measures which have been introduced to lessen the impact on poll tax payers in Scotland. Huge resentment at this hated tax has been stirred up among the Scottish people. There is complete disagreement between the local authorities, regional councils and district councils on the one hand, and the Government on the other, about the likely impact of the poll tax.

[Mr. McAllion]

The published figure for Dundee is £274. Apart from a few Tory yes-men who still survive in Dundee, the Secretary of State is unable to find anyone prepared to agree with that figure. The administration in the Tayside region expects the Dundee figure to be £330. If the poll tax had been introduced last year, it is estimated that the charge would be £291 in Dundee for the current year. The conclusion of the finance convenors of Tayside region and Dundee district was that the figures produced by the Secretary of State were nothing less than a stunt to promote party political propaganda. They have been presented to confuse Dundee's poll taxpayers when they come to decide who is to blame for the charge that they will have to pay in the coming year. It is clear that the Government wish the blame to lie with local councils.

I can understand why the Tories believe that the poll tax is a great wheeze. First, Scottish Ministers will make a great deal out of its introduction. If the Secretary of State's figures are accurate for Edinburgh, he will benefit by nearly £800 a year when a comparison is made with the sum that he pays in rates. That is probably one of the main reasons why the right hon. and learned Gentleman was able to support such a hated measure in defiance of the wishes of those whom he claims to represent. Conservative supporters in Scotland will benefit from the poll tax. That is another reason why the Government think that it is a good idea to introduce it. Their supporters are in the better-off and more highly rated areas and more likely to benefit from the poli tax when it is introduced.

More importantly for the Tories, local authorities will be inhibited from providing services when the mechanism of the poll tax takes effect. In the main, the burden of the tax will fall on the poor and those who are average working class. Those are the people who cannot afford to pay the tax. That is the main reason why the Government have introduced it.

The position in Scotland is "Heads the rich win, tails the poor lose." That is why the Tories are introducing the poll tax, and that is why they will lose the next general election.

11.53 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Today's announcement means that Edinburgh's residents will be paying £200 more in poll tax than the sum that should be required of them. The Government have prised money from Edinburgh to give to other parts of the country. The Secretary of State for Scotland, an Edinburgh Member, has done nothing to help the city. Indeed, the opposite is the truth. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has calculated that each poll tax payer in Glasgow should receive £336-worth of local services, but he expects every Edinburgh payer to get by on £214-worth. Why is Edinburgh to have £122 less per payer than Glasgow to have its streets cleaned, its housing estates kept in order, its libraries stocked, its bins collected, its roads repaired and its schools equipped and staffed? The answer is that the Secretary of State has sold out the people of Edinburgh to ingratiate himself with the Prime Minister.

I am not saying that Glasgow should receive less than Edinburgh. I am merely saying that Edinburgh should receive its fair share, not the unfair share that the Secretary of State has given it. He is a Secretary of State who is more concerned about the furtherance of his own career than in standing up for the capital city of Scotland. Of the eight Secretaries of State for Scotland who have held office in my lifetime, the present incumbent has done the most damage to Edinburgh. It is little wonder that he is ashamed to stay in his place throughout the debate and to speak for himself. He should be ashamed of his record. The greatest service that he could perform now for Edinburgh and Scotland generally would be to resign.

11.54 pm

Mr. Lang: With permission, I shall reply to the debate.

Given the speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), one would not think that the increase in revenue support grant to Edinburgh next year, as compared to rate support grant this year, is no less than 17·1 per cent. The increase over the figure, after the imposition of penalties on Edinburgh as a result of its budgeted programme last year, is no less than 44 per cent. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is unfair to his constituency, he must have a curious idea of fairness.

Before I attempt to answer some of the detailed points that have been made tonight, it is worth repeating the main features of the settlement—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no."] Opposition Members have tried hard to lose sight of the fact that public expenditure provision is 8 per cent. more than provision in the current year when measured on a comparable basis.

For the revenue support grant, the specific grant payments translate the increase in aggregate Exchequer grant to a 9·8 per cent. increase in revenue support grant. Even the president of COSLA described that as reasonable and realistic. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) although he choked on the words, almost said that the settlement was generous.

I must reply to the serious point raised by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his own behalf and that of his hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). I have already said that, in general, the Government propose to make no subsequent adjustments to the revenue support grant. There are, of course, some exceptional cases. This year, the grant apportionment to Strathkelvin and Bearsden was £306,000 less than it should have been. That was the result of faulty figures submitted by Strathkelvin and Bearsden regional council, which under-estimated the empty property relief element. It is our intention that the council's mistake should not be allowed to penalise the district, and we shall put that right next year. We have given a written assurance to the district council about that.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): When the Minister says next year, does he mean the next calendar year or the next financial year?

Mr. Lang: When we introduce the next Revenue Grant Support (Scotland) Order we shall make the necessary adjustment. There will be time within the financial year for the payments to be made to the district council. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that those payments do not all come at the beginning of the year, but are phased over the year and will be adjusted so that the council receives the full £306,000.

There is limited time left, but it is important to try to reply to some of the points raised in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was

absolutely right to congratulate Strathclyde region on showing considerably more realism in its approach to the community charge than some Opposition Members. That council's figures are within £1 of our anticipated figure for the community charge. My hon. Friend was also right to point out that Borders regional council's plan to increase its spending by 11·1 per cent. has more to do with the likely community charge level in that area than anything to do with safety-netting or revenue support grant. Its revenue support grant is to be increased by 13·5 per cent.—more than double the rate of inflation—and for districts within that region the increase will be between 8·5 per cent. and 41·5 per cent.

Most comment this evening was about safety nets and that represents no more than the phasing in of grant changes. The large gains in some areas are being phased in gradually to protect other areas, but it is important that, as soon as possible, we should get away from the safety net figure so that there is complete accountability and that is our intention.

The major contributors to the safety net have been the recipients of the largest grant increases, even after safety-netting. Those grants range up to 14·6 per cent. for regional councils and up to 81 per cent. for district councils. Strathclyde regional council is the major beneficiary of the safety net. In some of its districts——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 146.

Division No. 31] **[11.58 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*

Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1988, dated 28th November 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, dated 28th November 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

MERCHANT SHIPPING

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Safety at Work Regulations) (Non-UK Ships) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 1st December, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Waste Disposal (Planning Regulations)

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

12.9 am

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): On 22 December, I tabled a written question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I asked

"on how many occasions in the last year for which figures are available were proceedings taken against contractors and developers under sections 3 and 16 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974; and if he will make a statement."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), in reply, told me:

"proceedings were taken in England and Wales in 130 cases under section 3 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, and in eight cases under section 16."

I also asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State

"whether he will review the enforcement powers available to local authorities under current planning and pollution control legislation;"

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West told me that the Department had

"appointed Robert Carnwath QC to review local authorities' planning enforcement powers. His report is expected in the new year. An announcement will be made shortly afterwards. We have also announced proposals which should make local authorities' enforcement powers more effective in relation to air pollution and waste disposal."—[*Official Report,* 22 December 1988; Vol. 144, c. *434.*]

I urge a speedy announcement following receipt of the Carnwath report. Believe it or not, I have read the lengthy material which has been collected over about two years and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West on their work, which I greatly welcome.

I also asked the Secretary of State for the Environment

"if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has inspected the site used by contractors acting on behalf of Tesco Stores at Petersfinger near Salisbury."

I tabled that question because something had gone wrong there. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the meadows had been buried. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West told me:

"Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution has not inspected the site but is aware of the situation. The matter is one for local planning and waste authorities, both of which are taking the necessary action."—[*Official Report,* 10 January 1989; Vol. 144, c. *505.*]

If the necessary action was being taken, what had happened in Salisbury to cause such anger by so many people and community organisations? The Tesco store in Salisbury is in a cramped part of the town and is very popular. It was decided to move the store out of town, unfortunately to land designated for industrial use. Objections were made by Wiltshire county council and Salisbury district council because they could not recommend a breach of their own structure plan. That decision was overturned on appeal by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, with costs being awarded against Salisbury district council. The store is now under construction.

On 18 December I received a letter from Mr. Andrew Christie-Miller, the county councillor for the ward involved. He said that the contractors had completely ignored the request by the county council to cease operations and apply for planning permission. As a result, by Saturday 17 December their work was complete, and about five acres of valuable water meadow lying not only within a special landscape area but also within the landscape setting to a historic town had been lost. He said that the action of the contractors was totally unacceptable and that their flagrant disregard for the statutory planning system was nothing short of scandalous.

Salisbury civic society and the south Wiltshire branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England also wrote today:

"So valuable are these meadows, it is absolutely imperative that any development or alteration of them should be allowed only after careful consideration. It is intolerable that a developer should, by working non-stop with masses of heavy equipment, be able to make a major alteration in part of them without permission and before anything can be done to stop him.

It is especially galling that the developer doing this at great haste at the moment is building an out-of-town superstore which was strongly opposed by the District and County Councils and members of the public at the planning appeal Inquiry, but nevertheless sanctioned by the Minister responsible."

On 19 December Wiltshire county council issued a statement saying that it regretted what had taken place. It said:

"it is quite clear from the evidence that, on December 8, the agent for the company carrying out the tipping was made aware that planning permission was required and that, pending an application for planning permission, tipping should stop. This advice was confirmed in a letter to the company in which the company was invited to act responsibly and to cease tipping."

The county council went on to say:

"On a general level, local authorities faced difficulties in preventing such activities because some companies, while fully aware of the legal position, flout the law on the basis that time is on their side and not on the side of the local authorities."

The county council said that it would pursue that matter vigorously.

Salisbury district council acted impeccably throughout, reporting what was happening to the south-east planning sub-committee on 7 December. I visited the site on the afternoon of Saturday 16 December. The site manager and I had an amicable and detailed discussion in the course of which he said that, with the wisdom of hindsight, it would have been better to apply to the relevant authorities. It was clear that the whole operation had been meticulously planned by the developers. The highway authority and the police had been consulted about the transporting of the waste from the site of excavation on one side of the road to the meadows on the other, the road in question being the A36 main trunk road between Bristol and Southampton. Arrangements had been made for clearing the mud off the road and no objection had been received from the police. "Why not?" I asked myself. I have to say that I was horrified.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to have words, during the course of her busy life, with our hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), the Minister for Roads and Traffic, because huge earth-moving trucks, normally associated with motorway development, were trundling around the site. It was dusk. Those vehicles were not lit in accordance with any highway regulation. They were operating around a roundabout on a busy public highway. Were they insured? What would have happened if there had been an accident? Was the diesel oil taxed for highway use?

[Mr. Robert Key]

The police told me that they are powerless to stop this sort of highway use by those vehicles as a result of a court judgment some years ago involving a little dumper truck which had to transport bricks from one part of a building site to another across what was technically a public highway. This is another aspect of waste dumping, but what is waste? After all, one man's waste is another man's profit.

The outcome of this saga to date is that the owner of a few acres of second-rate agricultural land, sandwiched between a sewage works and a commercial development and which, in a few years, will be unhelpfully cut off by a likely and welcome bypass of Salisbury, has gained a great deal of new top soil. That is true, but is definitely not the point. The point is, why do we have a Department of the Environment, local planning authorities, dedicated councillors on planning committees and professional planning officials if our statutory planning regulations can be ignored with such impunity? At a time when the Government are making such good and welcome progress on environmental matters, it is tragic to see irresponsible developers ignoring local sensitivities in the name of progress.

Of course, developers have clever lawyers who now argue that it was really agricultural improvement all along, so they did not need planning permission. That is significant. If Tesco was so sure that it did not need any planning permission or other agreement, why did it not go through the usual channels which, as an experienced developer, it knows very well? If it had thought of agricultural improvement as a legitimate reason for dumping before this row, why did it disregard Wiltshire county council, Salisbury district council and Wessex water authority, take no notice of them and ignore their officials and their letters? I hope that the newly knighted Tesco chairman, Sir Ian MacLaurin, in his shining armour, will at the very least knock together the heads of those of his employees who are in danger of besmirching his escutcheon. This is no pleasure to me because Tesco has a good record on health food in its stores. It is good on environmental matters such as the introduction of unleaded fuel for its fleet of vehicles.

Early on, Wiltshire county council and Salisbury district council were criticised for acting so slowly, but, if they had rushed into an enforcement order and issued a stop notice, or had, after that, sought a slow and costly High Court injunction, the developers could have subsequently argued agricultural improvement as a justification and been awarded substantial costs against the county and district councils. I have been told that, in a recent similar case in the south of England, the costs were a quarter of a million pounds against a planning authority.

Local planning authorities are increasingly inhibited from taking enforcement action because, as the District Planning Officers Society says in its response to the Department of the Environment review of planning control enforcement powers,

"The Planning Control system is intended to control development in the interests of the community, with fairness to the developer."

The community may reasonably ask that that should be done effectively, efficiently and economically. The present system of enforcement has failures in respect of each of those aims. In particular, it is slow, uncertain, expensive and potentially dangerous for the enforcing authority. At least one reported case has dragged on for six years without the enforcement notice coming into effect.

There is a conflict of authority between completing detailed statements of development control policy contained in local plans and the published ministerial statements and guidance. That gives great scope for legal arguments about which should be followed in a particular case. The powers of enforcement and penalty tend to be ineffective when used against a determined or well-resourced contravener. Of course the costs incurred in a semi-judicial appeals procedure are well out of proportion to the costs considered reasonable in the original development control decision-making process.

In the Salisbury case, an informal request to a developer's contractor to act reasonably and stop dumping waste failed, as it usually does. I am sure that many hon. Members have discovered that the public are speechless when told that works carried out without consent are not illegal. Opinion is steadily concluding that penalties should be imposed for carrying out development without planning permission. In other words, it should be criminalised. I understand that the Royal Town Planning Institute still opposes that course. However, tomorrow the Association of District Councils will hold a crucial meeting to reconsider its position on opposition to criminalisation. Previously it had said that it was opposed to criminalisation. Tomorrow's decision will be very significant. Perhaps when my hon. Friend the Minister addresses the District Planning Officers Society later today she will have something to say about that.

Apart from the fact that the law is often breached too lightly in the belief that an appeal is likely to succeed and in the knowledge that there is no penalty, unauthorised development can cause irreparable ecological damage. The fear that magistrates courts would be unable to deal with the complex issues involved in enforcement procedures is unfounded. If the offences were criminalised, the evidence is that penalties like those for contraventions of building regulations which are imposed successfully by magistrates courts would not be needed frequently. That procedure actually cuts down the number of offences.

There are far fewer cases of serious contraventions of building control regulations than there are breaches of planning control. That is a good argument in favour of criminalisation. The penalties imposed by the courts in practice often do not reflect the potential profit to the contravener arising from his contravention or, in many cases, the damage to the environment or—and this is crucial—damage to public confidence in the system. That confidence is very important. I was distressed to see the low morale of district councillors serving on planning committees and the general public's disbelief about the planning process in recent years. Penalties should therefore be related to public confidence and damage to the environment.

The water authority is a crucial partner in the Salisbury case. This is a crucial issue which the Department of the Environment should bear in mind as the Water Bill is before the House. The general manager of Wessex Rivers wrote to me on 22 December. He informed me that, in this case, the authority was advised of the situation by Salisbury district council early in the morning of Wednesday 7 December 1988. It contacted the contractor during that morning and informed him that, because the River Avon is a main river, the dumping of waste requires

consent in accordance with land drainage byelaw No. 28. Consent had not been applied for, and the contractor was verbally advised to cease operations and make application for consent.

That telephone conversation was confirmed by the authority's letter dated 7 December 1988. It contained a notice to stop work as prescribed by the Land Drainage Act 1976. The contractor ignored both the water authority notice and its advice and disposed of all the material on the site. He submitted a retrospective application for consent, which is being considered.

On 10 January, Wessex Rivers received a retrospective planning application. However, the developer is not off the hook yet. Because the dumping used up flood storage capacity, that volume must be restored in another way. The ecology and the geomorphology of the River Avon basin is very delicate. For about 300 years, it has been subject to a complicated system of controls by which water flow is restricted so that little flooding occurs downstream. Crucial to that control is flood storage capacity. In this case, the developer has removed that capacity. It will not be easy to lower the flood plain close to the dumping site. The geology is not simple. More significantly, the site is close to a sewage works having a system of main drains that must not be disturbed.

Another aspect is the Nature Conservancy Council's statement that significant flora and fauna have been lost beneath the tipping. It wants the developer to provide an alternative area with the plants protected. A decision on that will be taken as soon as possible. So we have seen 300 years of English history and of English countryside buried. Salisbury fought and lost the battle to prevent the construction of an out-of-town retail development on scarce agricultural land. A public inquiry into another superstore development at Netherhampton road reopens on 21 February. That site is also on meadowland, in sight of the cathedral.

Not only are planning authorities unable to foresee the kind of irresponsible dumping that I have described, but they have no authority to prevent it. It is doubtful that a section 52 agreement on dumping is appropriate. Not only Salisbury will be watching future development like hawks.

I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to step up the monitoring of the operation of local authority enforcement. How can the community protect its environment in the present circumstances? Salisbury is a thriving commercial centre, and has been for 700 years, having adapted to changing patterns of retailing over those centuries. But it is also the country of Constable, Isaac Walton, Handel, Augustus John, William Golding and V. S. Naipaul. Above all, Salisbury is one of our great medieval cities, crowned by our cathedral. Does that count for so little when weighed at the grocery counter?

Often my hon. Friend the Minister has shown her true mettle in her ministerial job in caring for our environment. What advice will she give our elected councillors and the House tonight?

12.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on once again taking the opportunity to raise subjects of great and serious concern to his constituents. They are fortunate to have a Member of Parliament who represents their interests so forcefully, assiduously and ably. My hon. Friend raises a matter of serious concern and a particularly regrettable case.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will be familiar with the splendid landscape setting of the historic town that my hon. Friend represents. In this matter, there are distinct roles for each level of local authority primarily responsible. The district council has responsibility for enforcement action in matters of local planning control. As to waste disposal in England, the county council generally has responsibility for deciding planning applications, and is the waste disposal authority under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. That gives the county council responsibility for preparing a waste disposal plan for controlled waste and for issuing disposal site licences where planning permission has been granted.

The county council should also be responsible for enforcement in cases of possible contravention of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, including any suggeston of the illegal dumping of controlled waste on unlicensed land.

As my hon. Friend said, in the chapter of events that unfolded during December both district and county councils rapidly become aware of what was happening and took steps to inform those concerned of the implications of their actions. I understand that Salisbury district decided on 4 January not to take further action at this stage in its capacity as local planning authority, but the planning and countryside panel of Wiltshire county council is meeting later this month to consider what action it might take. The county council has already stated that it will pursue the matter vigorously, within the limits of the law.

This is essentially a local matter, albeit an extremely serious one: it is rightly and properly the concern of the local authorities. My hon. Friend will therefore understand that it is not appropriate for me to comment specifically any further at this stage. I think that it would help, however, if I described the range of available powers in planning and waste disposal enforcement which are relevant in this and similar cases.

Our planning system is of long standing. It seeks to balance the rights and interests of developers with those of the community. My hon. Friend rightly referred to the important question of public confidence, and we are looking at that very carefully. The administration of such matters rests essentially with the local planning authority, which is primarily responsible for deciding on planning applications, enforcing decisions and taking steps when faced with possible offences under the Town and Country Planning Acts. The Secretary of State has a range of appellate functions under that legislation, which include rights of appeal against enforcement action. The provisions have been criticised at times for being slow and cumbersome; local authorities themselves have been concerned about the opportunities for delay afforded by procedures for appealing against such action.

My hon. Friend referred to the Carnwath inquiry. An action plan and the report of an efficiency scrutiny of enforcement notice appeals were published in May 1988. Following that, Robert Carnwath was asked to undertake a review of planning enforcement powers. My hon. Friend rightly said that enforcement should be effective, efficient and economical, and that too often it is slow, uncertain and expensive.

The terms of reference of the review are to examine the scope and effectiveness of provisions in parts V and XII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 relating to

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

enforcement of planning control—including appeals to the Secretary of State—and to make recommendations for improvements to the present provisions, or for alternative provisions. As part of the review Mr. Carnwath has consulted the local authority associations, the professional bodies and many other organisations concerned with planning control, and is now considering their comments.

My hon. Friend referred to the suggestion that development without planning permission should be made a criminal offence, to dispense with the need for lengthy enforcement actions after the event. Whether or not the Association of District Councils decides to take up that suggestion, it will be a matter for Mr. Carnwath's consideration, and we shall await his report with interest.

My hon. Friend also referred to enforcement of the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act. Again, these are primarily matters for the relevant waste disposal authories—mainly county councils in England and district councils in Wales. Section 3 of the 1974 Act makes the deposit of controlled waste without a licence illegal except in certain prescribed circumstances. Those circumstances are if a waste is not within the definition of "controlled waste", or if the operation is specifically exempted by the Collection and Disposal Regulations 1988—for example, the deposit of waste on agricultural land as fertiliser, or if the waste is being treated in ways specifically exempted from licensing requirements. Prosecution of an offence under this section brings a maximum penalty of £2,000 and a two-year term of imprisonment, or unlimited fine on indictment.

In addition, steps can be taken by the authority under section 16 to serve a notice on the occupier of the land requiring removal of any illegally deposited waste, and action to eliminate or reduce the consequences of such a deposit. There are penalties for anyone failing to comply with such a notice.

It can be seen that there are existing powers for local authorities to act on the deposit of wastes. It is for them to consider the various issues; whether controlled waste is involved; whether the operation is or is not exempted by one route or another and to take into account the local circumstances of any particular incident.

In general terms, we should like local authorities to take more rigorous action over prosecutions under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. I put that strong message to waste disposal officers at a waste disposal conference in 1988. It is very important for public confidence that the regulations are seen to be enforced and for it to be seen that when cases have been properly prepared and firmly represented, prosecutions have every chance of being successful and of being particularly effective in improving disposal standards, reducing fly tipping and dealing with similar problems. My hon. Friend referred to the figures which I had already supplied to him.

Waste disposal authorities are further supported by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. We have recently increased the number of inspectors dealing with waste matters from five to 14. That will put them in a particularly effective position for the systematic audit of waste disposal authorities and for conducting a progressive review of and adding to the 26 waste management papers that are already available. It must be recognised, however, that the inspectorate is not there to inspect and control each individual disposal site. That is the function of the waste disposal authorities. Their task is to provide an audit function and to advise on and set standards.

I hope that I have clearly spelt out many of the powers that are already available to waste disposal authorities to ensure the safe disposal of controlled waste. However, we believe that there is scope for improvement. The Department has made proposals and has consulted relevant groups with a view to strengthening the law that governs waste management.

In essence, we want the controls to be extended to cover not just the actual disposal of waste, as is the case now, but the whole process from the time that the waste is produced, through its transportation and disposal to the time when a landfill site can finally be certified as being safe.

We propose to introduce a duty of care on producers and holders of waste to take all reasonable steps to ensure the legal and safe disposal of that waste. It will not then be possible for a producer simply to hand over his waste to a contractor and forget about it without first satisfying himself about the contractor's competence.

Carriers of controlled waste will have to be registered with a waste disposal authority, with powers for authorities to refuse or revoke registration if the carrier is convicted of a pollution offence. A waste producer, to exercise his duty of care, will need to check that his carrier is licensed. Equally, the carrier will have to check on exactly what he is carrying to avoid committing an offence himself.

We also propose that, when considering applications for disposal licences, authorities will be able to take account of relevant convictions of the applicants in the previous five years, their technical competence and their financial stability. There will be powers for authorities to impose pollution control conditions to apply to a site after the deposit of waste at that site has ceased. Sites will thus have to be monitored until we can be satisfied that they are safe in the long run.

In addition, we envisage the imposition of charges, both for licences and for carrier registration. That will not only provide resources for authorities but, even more important, will ensure that, through the price mechanism, the polluter really does pay.

My hon. Friend has raised a very important constituency case, about which, rightly, both he and his constituents are deeply concerned. Salisbury is a historic town. It is situated in the midst of fine countryside and is surrounded by areas of great natural significance. The local authorities are still considering these matters. The Government are committed to the provision of the highest possible standards and procedures for licensing, for the disposal of waste and for regulating and enforcing licences.

To support the proposals that I have outlined there is a range of other, less dramatic but nevertheless significant changes that we plan to introduce as soon as the legislative programme permits. In total, they add up to a comprehensive overhaul of the system that has generally served us well over the past 10 to 12 years. The package that we are assembling will provide for a coherent system of waste management that will last us well into the 21st century. I shall, of course, bear in mind the example that has caused so much concern to my hon. Friend and his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 January 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL
(By Order)
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 19 January.

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL
[Lords] (By Order)
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 19 January.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

1. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

2. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

4. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the work of the security forces over the Christmas holiday.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): During the past year 93 people died as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland. These included 39 members of the security forces and 54 civilians of whom one third were believed to have been terrorists. The remainder were civilians with no connection with the security forces. There have been no deaths so far this year.

During the recent period, including Christmas, as throughout 1988, the security forces continued to act with determination and courage. This has resulted in a significant number of people being charged with serious offences, while some 550 weapons, over 100,000 rounds of ammunition and 10,500 lbs of explosives have been recovered in Northern Ireland.

The Garda Siochana has recovered over 300 weapons, about 140,000 rounds of ammunition, 1,000 lbs of explosives and 380 gallons of nitrobenzene. In addition, a substantial find was made in county Offaly on 4 January which included over 35 mortar bombs containing a large amount of Semtex explosive. The House may know that there was a further significant discovery this morning near Dundalk of an amount of ammonium nitrate and nitrobenzene.

Mr. Maginnis: The Secretary of State, like many of us, will be aware that the figures that he quoted give very little satisfaction to the people of Northern Ireland. There has been a steady increase in the number of deaths in the past three years. The "significant" finds of more than 500 weapons are less significant nowadays in comparison with the weapons now available and those that were available in the past. Following the Secretary of State's visit to the west of my constituency earlier this week, will he ensure that no change is made to the permanent vehicle check points there? I hope that any changes that he proposes will be discussed properly with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and receive its support, as I am certain that the removal of check points would not.

Mr. King: Obviously I endorse the hon. Gentleman's opening comments. Although the number of deaths is the same as the figure for the year before, that figure is far too high. At the same time, as he knows, we are in the teeth of what the IRA intend to be a sustained campaign, of which the chief constable of the RUC made mention. It would be right to pay tribute to the efforts of the security forces over the past few months in preventing what could have been, and what was forecast to be, an appalling end to the year. That did not actually happen, but that does not mean that there is any room for complacency. It is right to recognise the significant number of finds of arms and explosives and the significant number of arrests where charges have been preferred as well.

As to the hon. Gentleman's particular point, he knows that I will not give him a blanket answer from the Dispatch Box, but it is vital that we make the very best use of available resources. That may not always mean leaving security checks in a static position, which takes up a lot of manpower and can often be easily bypassed.

Mr. Maginnis: What will happen if the security check points are removed?

Mr. King: The security forces may be more effective and more able to bring help if they operate in a mobile fashion. I take seriously the need for the closest possible understanding on any such matters.

Mr. Maginnis *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am the first to appreciate the seriousness of Northern Ireland questions, but I ask right hon. and hon. Members to make them brief so that we may progress more quickly through the Order Paper.

Mr. Maginnis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I have few opportunities to speak as a Member of Parliament for Northern Ireland. The security situation is extremely——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman not to challenge me. I am anxious to call as many right hon. and hon. Members aa possible. Long supplementary questions lead to long answers, which slows our progress through the Order Paper.

Mr. Flannery: During the many years that several right hon. and hon. Members have been in the House, whenever security questions have been asked a state of deadlock has been revealed and we seem to get no further. It is always

said that we shall defeat the IRA militarily, but politics are never discussed. As one who is deeply frustrated at that situation, may I suggest that the Minister call together the political parties of Northern Ireland—for example, the church groupings—at a conference to discuss not only defeating the IRA but the political situation as it is viewed by the various Northern Ireland groupings? Is that not the right way forward rather than sterile discussions about what armaments will be deployed?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to the pointlessness of the campaign of violence, which only damages the prospects for peace for all the people in the Province and brings misery and sadness in its wake. I am anxious to encourage the maximum dialogue, in whatever form is possible, between all constitutional parties supporting the democratic route and not subscribing to violence.

Mr. Field: Do the numbers of those killed in Northern Ireland given by my right hon. Friend include the innocent grandfather and granddaughter who were murdered returning home from a game of bingo? Do they include the two elderly people who were rewarded by an IRA bomb for their kindness in calling on a neighbour? Do they include the two people killed outside the swimming pool in the Falls road? How many innocent victims are included in the figures given by my right hon. Friend?—[HON. MEMBERS: "They were all innocent."] How many innocents were killed by what the IRA obscenely calls a mistake?

Mr. King: I confirm that the figures include just those cases to which my hon. Friend refers and many others —including Gillian Johnston, and the schoolgirl on the school bus who, fortunately was not killed. They were just some of the casaulties of the totally callous campaign being waged by the IRA. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the evilness of that campaign of violence.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Secretary of State aware of the blanket searches currently taking place in Armagh, Derry and Belfast? If so, will he confirm whether individual searches are the result of reasonable suspicion, or are those blanket searches being used to cover up targets and sources of specific information? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is outrageous that innocent people should suffer and flies in the face of every precept of natural and legal justice?

Mr. King: No, I confirm that there is no question of searches being made on a random basis. They are made only when there is good reason to relieve that there is cause for concern. Recently I received a complaint about the searching of a number of houses in west Belfast. Unfortunately, it was necessary to search 43 houses, but seven hides were found in them. In five of those hides nine mortars, 1,500 rounds of ammunition and 400 lbs. of home-made explosives were discovered. I make no apology for those searches. If they will save a grandfather and granddaughter going home from bingo from being mutilated and being blown clean across the road and into a nearby field they will continue to be made.

What is absolutely outrageous—I agree with the hon. Gentleman—is that innocent people are having their homes uprooted because evil men are intimidating and threatening them and forcing them to hide explosives and weapons in their houses. That is what is outrageous, and the House must stand as one against such practices.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman take note of the question put to him by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and give an unequivocal assurance today that he will not overrule the recommendations of the RUC, which knows better than the Army how to safeguard the lives of individuals on the border?

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman to consider the serious situation arising as a result of the closure of part-time police stations? As he is well aware, when the police withdraw from them those police stations become assault targets—two have been bombed already—and much manpower is needed to search them before they are re-occupied. Will the right hon. Gentleman study the position?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also consider the dates of the two coming elections? Why should the security forces have to be employed on two days when the elections could be held on one day, thus easing the burden on the security forces?

Mr. King: On the first point, I cannot add much to what I said to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). I take seriously the RUC's concerns in any such matters. At the same time I know that how best to use available resources is a matter of real concern to those involved in security so as to create maximum uncertainty for terrorists, which in turn creates maximum security for the people whom the security forces are seeking to protect. Having said that, however, I take the hon. Gentleman's point seriously.

I also take seriously the hon. Gentleman's point about part-time police stations. None of the issues is easy. It is a matter of deciding on the best use of manpower, which stations it is most sensible to man on a full-time basis and where stations are needed. We are looking at that matter carefully.

I see no prospect of changing the dates of the elections to make them coincide, but I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about the additional burden placed on the security forces.

Ms. Mowlam: I am sure that the Secretary of State will acknowledge the difficulties when a street is searched and everybody becomes confused and upset, but in view of his acknowledgment of the increased number of house searches will he clarify what he means by non-random?

Mr. King: Non-random means when the security forces have good reason to believe that a house may contain hidden munitions. For instance, I hope that the hon. Lady will understand the outrage felt by any resident in the Creggan in Derry at the death of the two good neighbours and the way in which terrorists deliberately intimidate ordinary people into hiding weapons, insisting that they do so. That is intolerable and I hope that the House will not hesitate to make it clear where the blame for the problem really lies.

Sir Antony Buck: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it will be a matter of gratification to hon. Members on both sides that he has paid such a full tribute to our security

forces? Does he agree that probably no forces but ours could sustain the burdens that they have sustained over such a long period with such amazing forbearance?

Mr. King: Any holder of my office must be careful as one never knows what problem or tragedy may occur. None the less, it is right to pay tribute to the achievement of the security forces in the past few months. All the intelligence indicated that the IRA was determined to step up its campaign. Its members tried a whole range of different attacks of one sort or another, and the efforts of the security forces were beyond praise.

Although we cannot be certain about the future, I can assure the House that morale is high and that the security forces will do everything in their power to ensure that their performance is maintained.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

3. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the reforms introduced under the Anglo-Irish Agreement which have improved conditions for the nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Many programmes and measures have been introduced of value to all the people of Northern Ireland, including the minority, since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. Among the items which have benefited from discussion through the conference are the establishment of an independent commission for police complaints, the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act, new legislation aimed at securing full equality of opportunity in employment, the establishment of the international fund, the extension of the franchise for assembly and district council elections and the publication of the RUC code of conduct.

Ms. Short: The question for this House is what political strategy we have to end the bloodshed in Northern Ireland. Hon. Members seem to think that they have made a contribution when they denounce it, but it has been going on for 20 years and the prospects are that it will continue for another 20. Do we have a political strategy to bring peace to Northern Ireland? The Anglo-Irish Agreement was meant to be the strategy to reduce support for the men of violence by bringing in serious reforms for the disaffected community. Blanket searches create disaffection and support for paramilitary activity—that we know.

The Government seem to have given up. If they give up on any political strategy of reform and improvement and go for repression, things will get worse—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ask a question."] You are a fine lot to talk about that. What is the hope in the long term? Do the Government believe that this level of violence will go on indefinitely?

Dr. Mawhinney: In keeping with your injunction, Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. Lady that the Government are not embarked on any act or policy of repression. The acts and policies of repression in Northern Ireland are carried out by the Provisional IRA, not by the democratically elected Government backed by this House. The surest way of making the situation in Northern Ireland worse would be to take the hon. Lady's advice and take the security forces out and the British troops back home.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the progress made by the Anglo-Irish Agreement is constructive and useful? Will he confirm that the policy recommended by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) of removing the security forces from Northern Ireland——

Ms. Short: That is not my view.

Mr. Baker: —would be especially inappropriate in the light of the present need to remove the explosives and discover the ammunition dumped and hidden by terrorists in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes, indeed. It is obviously for the benefit of all the people in Northern Ireland that the British and Irish Governments should have good relations, that those relations should extend to co-operation in security—as was demonstrated by my right hon. Friend's answer—and that the legitimate concerns that both Governments share be dealt with to the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland.

Ms. Short: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister and the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) suggested that my view——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be held responsible for what Ministers or hon. Members say. I know that the hon. Lady feels aggrieved and misinterpreted, but I cannot help her.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Pursuant to the question asked by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), as the Anglo-Irish Agreement was intended to bring peace and stability will the Minister tell us what actions and reforms have brought benefit to the British people in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: The list that I gave in my main answer —*[Interruption.]*—contributes to the answer that the hon. Gentleman seeks, as did the information given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the first answer. The House should note that the hon. Gentleman is showing an unwillingness to accept that security co-operation, as evidenced by the information that my right hon. Friend has just given to the House, is of benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is it not correct that since the date of the Anglo-Eire Agreement the extradition arrangements with the Irish Republic have worsened?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman knows that we have extradition arrangements with the Irish Republic but that from time to time we have certain difficulties over them. *[Interruption.]* However, the understanding which underlies them and will make them more effective is well in place.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Minister aware that those hon. Members who are catcalling at his attitude towards the Anglo-Irish Agreement have, as their natural allies, the Provisional IRA and that both groups who adopt that attitude have no real interest in conciliation between the communities in Northern Ireland, which is the basis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? What every hon. Member should want, need and desire for the people of Northern Ireland and for the safety of our security forces—because it

represents the best hope for the island of Ireland and for our relations with the Republic of Ireland—is the proper strengthening and pursuit of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is obvious that what will benefit the people of Northern Ireland, and it will emerge from the Anglo-Irish Agreement, lies both in the security realm, which the hon. Gentleman has recognised, and in the political realm, whereby we can devise arrangements for the future of Northern Ireland which command the widespread support of the substantial majority of people on both sides of the community. That is what we are aiming to achieve and that is what this House supports.

Mr. Leigh: In view of the controversial views of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on the "Troops out" movement——

Ms. Short: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I know that the hon. Lady is aggrieved because she thinks that she has been misinterpreted, but I cannot be held responsible for what hon. Members say.

Ms. Short: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. What is the hon. Lady's point of order?

Ms. Short: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. This is the third attempt wrongly to describe my views on Northern Ireland. Like the majority of British people, I believe that there should be a political settlement and that Britain should politically withdraw from Northern Ireland. It is not my view—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know what the hon. Lady said.

Mr. Leigh: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. Clearly I was not heard the first time. In view of the controversial views on the "Troops out" movement that have been tendered by the hon. Member for Ladywood—

Ms. Short: That is not what I said.

Mr. Leigh: Can my hon. Friend think of any policy less likely to help the nationalist community than withdrawing the troops unilaterally? Can he think of any responsible nationalist politician who supports the hon. Lady's views on that matter?

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no doubt that the vast majority of people in the nationalist community, who are law-abiding people, have most to fear from the activities of the IRA and that they owe an immense debt of gratitude to the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Privatisation

5. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which functions of local councils in Northern Ireland he is considering for privatisation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The consultative paper on local government recently published by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland asks for comments on compulsory competitive tendering for the following district council activities: refuse collection and street cleaning, cleaning of buildings, grounds maintenance, vehicle maintenance, catering services and recreation and leisure services. Some construction and maintenance work may, in certain circumstances, also be put out to tender.

Mr. Ross: Within the past hour I have re-read the paper, just to ensure that my eyes did not betray me on the first occasion. Councils in Northern Ireland look after the burial of the dead when the churches do not look after it. Councils look after about half the burials in Northern Ireland. Their two other main functions are refuse collection and recreation. If those functions are privatised, what will be the point of having councils—or do the Government intend to givem them increased powers in some form or another?

Mr. Needham: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman's eyes do not deceive him on one issue. They certainly deceive him on the other issue. We are not talking about privatisation but about competitive tendering. It is a quite different matter. It may well be that large numbers of council activities will remain with the present staff once they have been looked into. But it is right that ratepayers should know that they are paying the proper price for the services that they get.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Before the Minister considers measures to encourage financial prudence in local government, will he consider the record of his own Department? In the past seven years the district rate of Castlereagh borough council has increased by only 17 per cent. whereas his Department's regional rate has increased by 53 per cent. Perhaps he should get his act in order first.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland does not set the regional rate in Northern Ireland. It is set by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland. The House should have the correct facts. Of course, all Government spending must be examined most rigorously and we must ensure that the taxpayer gets the best possible value for money.

Mr. McCusker: In view of yesterday's announcement on privatising water supplies in Great Britain, does the Minister intend to privatise the water service in Northern Ireland, and if not, why not?

Mr. Needham: We shall certainly consider whether we can privatise the water service in Northern Ireland, although the circumstances and the way in which water is delivered in Northern Ireland is different from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bellingham: While privatisation is important, does my hon. Friend agree that it is equally important that additional functions are devolved to the district councils to give them extra teeth and a more constructive role? Does the noble Lord agree with me that there has been disappointment since the Anglo-Irish Agreement in terms of the number of functions—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is a commoner here, I believe.

Mr. Needham: I agree with my hon. Friend on a great deal. I am only sorry that he did not ask his question in front of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

6. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the inter-parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: This is, of course, a matter for Parliament and my right hon. Friend the Lord President has been taking a close interest in it. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for forwarding to me his party's views.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Secretary of State aware that during my visit to Dublin before Christmas I discovered a wide cross-party enthusiasm to push forward the provisions made in the Anglo-Irish Agreement for the inter-parliamentary tier and a wide belief that the British Government are holding up that progress? Does the Secretary of State recognise that the distressing events which have occurred in the past three or four months have done severe damage, which he regrets as much as I do, to the Anglo-Irish Agreement? One way of giving that agreement new impetus and direction would be for the Secretary of State to press forward with the inter-parliamentary tier provided for in the agreement.

Mr. King: There is certainly no truth in the suggestion that the Government are holding up discussions on the matter. My right hon. Friend the Lord President has been taking a keen interest in it and so have I. But it is a matter for the House and for the Houses of Parliament. A number of hon. Members have been involved in discussions on various approaches.

Mr. Marlow: Would it not be more helpful to the situation in Northern Ireland to give more power to the elected representatives of Northern Ireland rather than to involve the parliamentarians of a country whose Prime Minister, although he might not like the methods of the IRA, certainly shares its objectives?

Mr. King: I must make it absolutely clear that my hon. Friend's last comment was quite unwarranted. Anyone with any knowledge of the history of IRA terrorism and the Irish Government's responses to it will know that there has been a very effective response while Mr. Haughey has been Taoiseach on this and on the previous occasion. The list that I read out of the number of Garda arms finds, the recent redeployments that have been taking place and the communication and relations that now exist between the RUC and the Garda are certainly most encouraging.

Mr. Bell: Is the Secretary of State aware of the series of discussions that have taken place between hon. Members of this House and Members of the Irish Dail, under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris)? Will he confirm that there is wide support in the House for an inter-parliamentary tier, based upon the——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Bell: It has its origins in the Anglo-Irish summit of 1981, rather than the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985. Is it not a fact that we would all benefit from a dialogue with fellow parliamentarians in the Irish Dail, and that that benefit would be shared equally by all people of the islands of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland?

Mr. King: I was sorry to hear hon. Members on the Unionist Benches shout "No" before they had even heard what the hon. Gentleman was talking about. He was talking about discussions being under the auspices of the IPU and how the matter might be pursued under the Intergovernmental Conference of 1981. It is a matter for the House, as to which forum hon. Members wish to go forward, and the Government will view it with interest.

Political Reform

7. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is considering to enable Northern Ireland political parties represented at Westminster to play a more constructive role in the administration of the Province.

14. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he is making towards his declared aim of devolution in the Province.

Dr. Mawhinney: All the main constitutional political parties have said that they support a policy of devolution. The two Unionist leaders put to my right hon. Friend nearly a year ago outline proposals about devolution. As he told them at the time, and on several subsequent occasions, he found their proposals constructive and suggested that the next step should be to move to inter-party dialogue. He has since repeated his call for further talks, without preconditions, and I confirm our hope that the Unionist and other party leaders can respond positively to my right hon. Friend's invitation.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: My hon. Friend will be aware of the promise in the Queen's Speech to give local politicians greater involvement in the affairs of Northern Ireland. What proposals has he for making that promise come true?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend will know that the proposals that were put to my right hon. Friend were seen not only by him but by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as a constructive basis for discussion. I confirm that we would wish to do what we could to encourage party leaders and members of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland to seek ways to enable them to sit down together without pre-condition and, if necessary, outside the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to consider how best to carry forward the governance of the Province.

Mr. Gow: If it was right in 1979 for our party to propose that we should seek to set up a regional council or councils in Northern Ireland with widely devolved powers over local matters, why is it wrong for us to implement those proposals in 1989?

Dr. Mawhinney: Because, as my hon. Friend knows, the other part of our manifesto commitment in 1979 was to seek to move towards devolution. The part that he quoted was in recognition of an inability to do so. I must repeat to my hon. Friend what I said in my original reply. All the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland have said that they support a policy of devolution, as does Her Majesty's Government. It is to that end that we are continuing to work.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As a better alternative to the failed Anglo-Irish Agreement is required, hon. Members will welcome the Minister's statement that he wants talks without any pre-conditions. Am I to assume that that means that his previous pre-condition that the Anglo-Irish Agreement remain in operation, has now been dropped?

Dr. Mawhinney: The right hon. Gentleman must understand that every political party in Northern Ireland can find some reason in history for not looking towards the future. In some cases it may be three years into history, in some cases it may be 30 years, and in other cases it may be 300 years. This Government believe that it is time for political parties in Northern Ireland to fix their eyes on the future and to find ways that will enable them to come together to put that into effect without pre-conditions and, I repeat to the hon. Gentleman, if necessary, outside the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Alton: Given what the Minister has just said, does he accept that the major aim of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was the creation of a cross-community devolved assembly? Does he accept that a logical step towards that objective might be the creation, under Standing Order No. 99, of the Northern Ireland Committee which would allow politicians from both sides of the community to come together? If that Committee was to meet in Northern Ireland, it might be a useful step towards devolution.

Dr. Mawhinney: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government's policy on devolution did not start with the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. I hear what the hon. Gentleman said about the Northern Ireland Committee. If approaches were made to the Government to reconstitute the Committee they would be looked at sympathetically.

Workers' Party (Peace Charter)

8. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement of his policy towards reconciliation in Northern Ireland in the light of the peace charter which has been sent to him by the Workers' party of Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Reconciliation between the two traditions is fundamental to the achievement of lasting peace and stability in Northern Ireland. The improvement of relations between the communities is a key element in the Government's approach. We are encouraged by the Workers' party's forthright rejection of terrorist violence and by its call for dialogue between political representatives in the Province.

Mr. Barnes: In rejecting all forms of terrorism and struggling for peace in Northern Ireland, the Workers' party is advocating constructive dialogue, the establishment of democratic machinery and procedures throughout Northern Ireland and equal opportunities based upon the elimination of poverty and unemployment. How well do the Government score on that scale?

Dr. Mawhinney: We support in broad principle the sort of proposals included in the Workers' party's peace charter. It may encourage the hon. Gentleman to know that I shall be inviting representatives of the party to talk to me about the proposals.

Mr. Budgen: Would not the course of reconciliation in Northern Ireland be most helped if the people of that Province had the same rights in the legislative procedures in the House as the remainder of the United Kingdom? Is is not an absolute disgrace that the criminal law of Northern Ireland can be changed by order after three hours' debate in the House without an opportunity for reconsideration, receiving the arguments of High Court judges in Northern Ireland or amendment?

Dr. Mawhinney: I note my hon. Friend's point and I note also that it is made at a time when there are two Bills relating to Northern Ireland passing through the House. If my hon. Friend has constructive proposals to make in terms of Northern Ireland legislation, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will listen to them.

Privatisation

9. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the privatisation of Harland and Wolff and Short Brothers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): Negotiations are continuing with the principal parties interested in acquiring Harland and Wolff.

With regard to Shorts, an information memorandum was issued on 10 January to a selected number of prospective buyers and more detailed discussions will now take place with them.

Mr. Cryer: Can the Minister justify those lunatic, catastrophic and dogmatic proposals in the light of the uncertainty about employment, investment and securing jobs in the strife-torn Province? Is it not absurd that, for example, Harland and Wolff is having to turn orders away? Only recently it lost an order for dredgers, which went to Holland. Is that not a complete catastrophe for the retention and development of jobs in Northern Ireland? Why do the Government not abandon privatisation? Will the Minister turn round and tell the woman in blue next to him to stop it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the House of Commons we refer to one another by our parliamentary titles or constituencies.

Mr. Viggers: Apart from anything else, the hon. Gentleman is selling Northern Ireland seriously short in terms of employment. Unemployment has fallen from 134,000 to 108,000 over the past two years. We have recently been successful in winning inward investment. The Government believe that the best future for Harland and Wolff is not in the public sector, supported by subsidy, but in the private sector, operating on a commercial basis.

As to Shorts, the information memorandum issued on 10 January invites responses by 10 February. We are now confident that we shall move the company into the private sector with Government support and that is what we intend to do. We are confident that it will be best for both companies.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Given that a number of people in senior posts at Harland and Wolff are looking for other positions because of the uncertainty there, will the Minister say how long it will take to make a decision about the shipyard?

The funeral is taking place today in Belfast of the parents of the senior public relations officer of Harland and Wolff, Dr. Maria Maloney. Will the Minister join me in expressing the House's sympathy to her?

Mr. Viggers: I join the hon. Gentleman in expressing our concern and grief over those affected by Sunday's accident. Northern Ireland has a population of 1·5 million people, few of whom have not been touched in some way by this terrible accident.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall move as briskly as we can to a solution of the present position at Harland and Wolff. We are aware that uncertainty is not good for the company, but it would not be good to set a timetable that might inhibit us from pursuing certain opportunities for continuing employment at the yard.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Beith: Following her visit to the site of the east midlands air crash, does the Prime Minister agree that the widespread speculation—some of which apparently was fuelled by United States' Government officials—attributing pilot error to Captain Hunt the day after he was so widely acclaimed as a hero, was utterly deplorable? Does she further agree that what is needed is not deeply hurtful speculation but the most thorough investigation of the causes of this dreadful crash?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It would be far better if everyone accepted that the best course after a tradegy of this kind is for those charged with the duty of investigating to get on with that task. Nothing should be said until it is properly and truly completed, with the one exception that if any technical problems are found during the course of the investigation information should be given so that they can be put right. Otherwise, there should be no speculation and we should wait until the facts are found.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Given the widespread concern in the west about the chemical warfare establishment being built in Libya, is the Prime Minister willing to take a Euro-initiative to try to persuade European firms not to provide the equipment on which it is based?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that there is widespread concern about the plant, which I believe is there to produce chemical weapons. We have the powers to stop exports that could be used for that purpose, which have been used, but usually persuasion has been enough. When people have told us that they have received certain orders and we have asked them not to proceed with them, they have agreed not to do so.

Q2. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Michie: Will the Prime Minister accept a timely warning that if she continues to ignore the wishes of the majority of Scottish people for constitutional reform and the right to look after their own affairs through their own Scottish Parliament, she, the Government and the Tory party could be responsible for the break-up of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: Many of us have been through these arguments before on Bills and the referendum, and know full well that the House was split, not always on party-political grounds, although we accept that we are the party that believes in the Union of the United Kingdom and will continue to do so. I would find it strange if the Labour party believed in separatism for Scotland.

Mr. David Martin: I welcome my right hon. Friend's continuing active interest in environmental issues and a cleaner atmosphere. In the run-up to the Budget, will she consider the wisdom of widening the tax differential between leaded and unleaded petrol to promote greater use of unleaded petrol?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor introduced a large differential in cost between leaded and unleaded petrol in favour of unleaded petrol, which was designed to encourage more people to use unleaded petrol. It is not possible for everyone to use it because it depends, obviously, on the kind of engine that one has in one's car. I believe that there will be progressively more use of unleaded petrol as new car engines come into use.

Mr. Kinnock: The Chancellor said yesterday that he was not worried by the further rise in the pound against the deutschmark. Is that the Prime Minister's view as well?

The Prime Minister: The main priority of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is the same as mine—to get inflation down. As my right hon. Friend says, one cannot have two priorities and that is—and will remain—his main priority.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister saying in her response to this House, importers and competitors that, in her view, it does not matter how high the pound goes?

The Prime Minister: I am saying that when one considers these many matters, the task and priority of getting inflation down takes precedence over other things and that one cannot have two priorities. The priority is getting inflation down.

Mr. Kinnock: Is it, then, the Prime Minister's view that in pursuit of that objective, British industry should be crushed between a high pound and high interest rates?

The Prime Minister: It will not have escaped the right hon. Gentleman's attention that the country that has had the sharpest increase in the value of its currency—Japan—is the country that has the highest balance of payments surplus.

Mr. Dickens: I wonder whether my right hon. Friend can tell the House whether the ground crew working on aircraft flying in and out of Northern Ireland—the engine mechanics and airframe mechanics—are positively vetted?

The Prime Minister: That is not a matter to which we would refer, but I do not think that it is wise to speculate in any way on the cause of that very tragic crash.

Q3. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunnachie: Can the Prime Minister tell the House what plans she has to prevent the dreams of home ownership—*[Interruption.]*—becoming the nightmares of bed-and-breakfast accommodation because of the Chancellor's policy?

The Prime Minister: With regard to bed-and-breakfast accommodation, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, it varies very much between local authority and local authority as to how they make use of that provision—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am sorry, did I mishear the question? That is not unusual in this House.

Mr. Dunnachie: What plans has the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please let us hear the question.

Mr. Dunnachie: Can the Prime Minister tell the House what plans she has to prevent the dreams of home ownership becoming the nightmares of bed-and-breakfast accommodation because of the Chancellor's policy?

The Prime Minister: More and more people are having their dreams of home ownership realised—opportunities they would never had had before. As far as repossession is concerned, the latest figures show that it is less than one third of 1 per cent.

Mr. Roger King: Is my right hon. Friend aware that tomorrow the city of Birmingham celebrates its 100th anniversary of being created a city and that celebrations will take place that will reflect the city's noble past and look forward to opportunities for the future? Has my right hon. Friend a message for the people of the city of Birmingham as they celebrate on that centenary?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate Birmingham. The city has played a tremendous part in our industrial and political history. I wish it well, and I hope and believe that it is well on the way to regaining its former industrial and commercial pre-eminence in our country.

Q4. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Allen McKay: Has the Prime Minister seen or heard of the report—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I know; I have to get it right. Has the Prime Minister seen or heard of a report suggesting that cook-chill causes a disease called listeria which is as dangerous as salmonella—perhaps more so? In view of the scare caused by one of her ex-Ministers over the Christmas period and by the fact that amended guidelines have been drawn up by the Ministry, what do the Government propose to do about the problem?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen the report, although I have read reports about the report. As the hon. Gentleman knows there is as yet far too little information about the problem, and my right hon. Friends are looking into the matter very carefully because they, too, are concerned about the facts and figures given in the new report.

Q5. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the work force of Amber Valley district council on winning the lion's share of recently tendered contracts, and will she congratulate and commend the leadership of that council on having made Amber Valley the first local authority to put all its services out to tender in accordance with the Local Government Act 1988, thus saving ratepayers more than £2 million?

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly congratulate Amber Valley district council on the most excellent way in which it has tackled the problems and I congratulate its leadership on having saved the ratepayer something like £2 million. I think that that example could be followed by many other councils. I understand that an Audit Commission report published today suggests that savings of 20 per cent. or more can be gained in contract prices, irrespective of whether the work has been won by the private sector or by the authority's own work force. May many others follow the lead given by Amber Valley district council.

Correspondence

Q6. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy as to whose signature appears on replies to letters she receives from members of the public dealing with matters of Government policy.

The Prime Minister: I receive several thousands of letters each week from members of the public. It is not possible for me to deal with all those letters personally and I must accordingly refer most of them to the Minister and the Department with responsibility for the policy in question. Others are signed by my staff at No. 10.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. George Flynn of 24 Amber Place, Holmgate sent a letter to the Prime Minister about his loss of £6·20 a week housing benefit. The reply came not from the Prime Minister's Office or from Social Security Ministers but from the transitional payments unit in Glasgow, and it was a political defence of the Government's policy. Should not the Government change their response entirely and ensure that civil servants are not instructed by them to act as their political hacks?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is being totally unreasonable. He knows full well that I should never even be able to come to the House to answer questions if I spent all day opening letters—4,000 a week. The Opposition would not like that. The hon. Gentleman also knows full well that we went to great lengths to set up the unit to deal with those special problems. I can only say that I congratulate my staff on sending the letter to the appropriate place to get the right answer.

Mr. Latham: If I were to dictate and sign personally a letter to my right hon. Friend asking her to ensure that two popular rural maternity units in my constituency remained open, would she make it her business to dictate and sign personally a reply to me of a favourable nature?

The Prime Minister: No, I can make no such promises that I would automatically answer for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Engagements

Q7. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Does the Prime Minister stand by the view, which she held when she was Secretary of State for Education in 1972, that nursery education should be available for all three and four-year-old children whose parents wished it? Will she, therefore, ensure that there is a favourable response from the Government to the unanimous report of the Education Select Committee on this matter?

The Prime Minister: There has been an increase of more than 100,000 pupils under five in nursery and primary schools—an increase of a quarter in eight years. That is really a very good performance, which followed the particular White Paper that bears my name. We also pointed out in that White Paper that authorities should consider carefully the role of voluntary playgroups. Many thousands of mothers devote considerable time and energy to organising them. We increased the financial support for the playgroups. We pointed out, too, that the most important thing for the increase of nursery education was that it was especially valuable for children whose homes and lives are restricted, for whatever reason. Therefore, priority would be given to areas of disadvantage. That has happened.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 16 JANUARY—Consideration in Committee of the Security Service Bill (1st Day).

Motions relating to School Curriculum Development Committee and Secondary Examinations Council orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 17 JANUARY—Conclusion of consideration in Committee of the Security Service Bill.

Motions on Scottish Housing Support Grant Orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY—Opposition Day (1st Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Freeze on Child Benefit". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "The Inadequacy of Government Provision for Pre-school Education and Child Care". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion to take note of EC Document on the beef regime 1988-89. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 19 JANUARY—Motions on the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1989-90 and supplementary reports, details of which will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 20 JANUARY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 23 JANUARY—Opposition Day (2nd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject for debate to be announced.

[Debate on Monday 16 January:
The School Curriculum Development Committee and Secondary Examinations Council (Designation of Staff) Order (SI 1988 No. 2171)
The School Curriculum Development Committee and Secondary Examinations Council (Transfer of Property) Order (SI 1988 No. 2172)
Debate on Tuesday 17 January:
The Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order
The Housing Revenue Account General Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order (SI 1988 No. 2081)
Debate on Wednesday 18 January:
Relevant European Community document
8903/88+COR 1 Review of the beef regime
Relevant report of European Legislation Commitee
HC 15-i (1988-89), para 5
Debate on Thursday 19 January:
Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1989-90 (HC 75)
Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1988-89 (HC 14)
Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 2) 1987-88 (HC 13)
Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 4) 1986-87 (HC 12)
Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 4) 1985-86 (HC 11)]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether he intends the football identity card Bill to be introduced in the House of Lords or in this House? It is a most contentious measure that invades the civil liberties of tens of thousands of people wishing quietly to go about their lawful business and involves the disclosure of confidential personal information to commercial companies. The Bill shows that the Government are prepared to allow football and its law-abiding spectators to be taken as hostages. Instead of dealing with the yobbos, the Government propose to make life even more difficult for their victims—the clubs, the spectators, and the police. The Bill is clearly so controversial that it should come first to this elected House. Will he now follow the precedent set by the then Norman St. John-Stevas as Leader of the House in 1979 when he accepted our representations over a similar matter and withdrew the proposal to introduce a controversial measure in the Lords?

When do the Government expect to announce the outcome of their policy review of the National Health Service? When may we expect a statement to be made in this House, and will it be made by the Secretary of State for Health or the Prime Minister?

When will we have a debate on the Fennell report on the King's Cross disaster? This is not just a constituency interest of mine. It affects all who travel on London Transport and, indeed, is of interest to anyone concerned with transport safety—and, God knows, that includes practically everyone in the country at present.

Does the Leader of the House recall that the Secretary of State for Education and Science told the House in December that he would be happy to debate the proposed replacement of student grants with student loans and that he would like it to be debated before 1 February and in Government time? When does the right hon. Gentleman intend to make his right hon. Friend happy, if he means to do so?

May I remind the Leader of the House that the Standing Orders of the House still require the establishment of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? When does he expect to come to the House with some proposals to ensure that Scottish Labour Members can serve on that Committee and do their duty, which they want to do, whether or not his colleagues want to?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me five questions about the business for next week and I shall do my best to answer them. He asked about the Football Spectators Bill. I can confirm that it will start in another place, and it is perfectly proper for it to do so. Successive Governments have started substantial measures in the House of Lords. It must be for each Government to organise their legislative programme and to decide on the appropriate House for the introduction of their Bills.

I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a specific date for a statement on the future of the NHS, but it will not be too long in coming. While I have not been able to confirm this, I imagine that the Secretary of State for Health would make the statement.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Fennell report on the King's Cross fire is an important issue which should be debated. I recognise that, although the hon. Gentleman has a constituency interest, the matter is of wider concern. I regret that the arrangements that we previously proposed for a debate were unacceptable to the Opposition. I cannot promise a debate in Government time in the immediate future, but I shall certainly bear his point in mind.

I recognise that student loans are a suitable matter for debate. I shall discuss the hon. Gentleman's question with

my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and see whether I can make the hon. Gentleman happy in the not-too-distant future. However, that is not necessarily my first priority in these matters because he is an understanding gentleman.

We had a reasonable debate recently in the House on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, and the House reached a conclusion. If I thought that the position had changed in any way, I would come forward with proposals. During the debate constructive suggestions were made and I have invited the hon. Gentlemen who made them to come and talk to me. I would be prepared to meet them and anyone else to see whether any progress can be made, but I cannot be too optimistic at present.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): In view of the question of the shadow Leader of the House, is my right hon. Friend aware that the Football Spectators Bill cannot come fast enough for those of us concerned for our constituents who have football grounds near their houses? Does he accept that the various press reports of rumblings on these Benches against the Bill are wholly unfounded and that we commend the Government on their admirable step? I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider introducing the Bill sooner rather than later.

Mr. Wakeham: I take note of my hon. Friend's points. It is an important measure and there is no room for any complacency in any part of the House. Last season there were more than 6,000 arrests at football matches and 6,500 ejections from grounds, so it is right that the Government proceed as soon as they can.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): As over the past year there has been both an enormous increase in the frequency in food poisoning, with more than 50 deaths from salmonellosis and increases in the number of cases of listeria infestations, as reported yesterday in the press, and as those are the direct responsibility of his colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will the Leader of the House provide time for a debate on this matter as soon as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future, but the Government are working with both the retail and manufacturing sectors of the food industry to address the problem of listeria in those foods most likely to be contaminated. The Department of Health is looking at the new data accumulating from various sources and considering their implications with the relevant experts.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Although I am tempted to register most strongly with my right hon. Friend my opposition to the national football membership scheme, my question relates to early-day motion 40.

[That this House calls for a full and early debate on the Barlow Clowes affair.]

Will my right hon. Friend seek to arrange at an early date a debate on the sad saga relating to the collapse of the Barlow Clowes companies, bearing in mind that more than 180 hon. Members have registered in that early-day motion their concern and demand for a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I fully recognise my hon. Friend's concern. There is nothing that I can usefully add to what has been said in this House in the recent past. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is co-operating fully with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the right course of action is probably to wait for that report to decide how best to proceed.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): As it has now become obvious that the price of a competitive economy is safety, and as there is evidence of reduced maintenance and inspections over a wide range of British industry, when may we have the opportunity to debate reconciling safety with the drive for profits?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept the premise of the right hon. Gentleman's question. The Government have brought forward a whole range of measures covering a wide range of policies which have been designed to improve safety. I see no incompatibility between a profitable and well-run industry and maintaining high safety standards. The chances of high standards being maintained are improved if the business is run efficiently.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members believe that the provision usually made for foreign affairs debates is completely inadequate? Instead of having occasional debates over the whole tour d'horizon of British interests, would it not be better to have more debates on regional issues so that most of us might have an opportunity to speak on important matters?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. and learned Friend's concern which is shared by a number of our colleages. I recently wrote to my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs setting out my views on the matter. I shall try to meet the spirit of what my hon. and learned Friend says, but, looking at past debates, considerably more hon. Members would have been able to take part if some of the speeches had been a little shorter.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Although the constituency of Richmond, Yorks has technically been unrepresented in this House only since the beginning of the week, is the Leader of the House aware that substantial issues are now arising in that area—for example, the lack of establishment of the local police force which the county council is anxious to press on the Home Secretary? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why the Government have decided to adopt an entirely different procedure in filling the vacancy in Richmond compared with the attitude adopted by the official Opposition in calling the Govan by-election quickly to keep the electors of Govan properly represented? Will he assure us that there will be no undue delay in moving the writ for Richmond?

Mr. Wakeham: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be no undue delay, but I hope that he was not thinking certain thoughts. We do not want to follow what happened to the official Opposition in Govan, which does not seem to be a very cheerful precedent.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Will my right hon. Friend tell the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that our hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) has been widely reported in the local press as looking after constituency affairs in the Richmond area in the interim?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend is quite right. Conservative Members ensure that, when there is a vacancy, one of our hon. Friends looks after the constituents' interests.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware of the increasing hazard to fishermen in the Firth of Clyde and the Irish sea caused by British and American submarines either submerging below them or getting caught in their nets? Is he aware that the latest incident took place on 3 January just off the coast of my constituency where the American submarine Will Rogers surfaced under a fishing vessel, the New Dawn? Will he arrange for either the Secretary of State for Defence or the Secretary of State for Transport, whoever is the responsible Secretary of State, to make an urgent statement to the House on that matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I am aware of this issue because I had the doubtful pleasure of hearing the hon. Gentleman speaking on the radio last night, and I gather that his comments were repeated this morning. This is a serious and important matter. The collisions between Royal Navy submarines and civilian craft are very rare. Submarine commanding officers are well trained in the avoidance of surface craft and every care is taken to avoid collisions. The Ministry of Defence pays fair and reasonable compensation to owners of civilian craft when Royal Navy vessels are shown to be liable. Accidents involving non-UK vessels are a matter for the Governments concerned.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend may well have read in the press that last week there was a 17-mile tailback of traffic in the north of England on the A1 on a day when there was very little commercial traffic on the road. That was in juxtaposition with a reply that I received from the Department of Transport stating that it has no plans now, or in the medium or long term, to uprate the A1 to motorway status. Is not that a disgrace and a matter that should be debated in this House?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept my hon. Friend's latter remark. However, in view of his comments, I will certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I hope that it is possible to arrange a debate, but I cannot promise one in the immediate future.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Has the right hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to read early-day motion 241 titled:

"Safety in the building and construction industry."?

It has been signed by 205 hon. Members from most parties, excluding the Conservative party, although Conservatives are welcome to sign it if they want to do so.

[That this House is deeply concerned and disturbed by the increase of accidents in the building and construction industry, leading to an increase in deaths and serious injuries; believes that this is partly due to the increase in self-employment, namely, lump labour and to some construction companies, in order to increase profits, ignoring the Health and Safety legislation; welcomes the efforts of workers and trades unions in the industry to halt the increasing numbers of deaths and injuries; fully supports the present campaign by workers and unions and other interested bodies to improve the situation; and further believes that there should be more factory inspectors appointed and that the legislation should be improved so that stronger action can be taken against those employers who ignore the legislation and thereby put the lives of the workforce at risk.]

The matter is important because of the increase in deaths and serious injuries in the construction industry. Will he assure us on the basis of this early-day motion that we will have an early debate on the matter because it is vital for people working in the industry?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the whole House will want to wish the hon. Gentleman a happy birthday. He has taken the opportunity to raise an important matter. The Government are concerned about health and safety in the construction industry generally. That is why we support the vigorous enforcement blitzes and publicity campaign on construction safety being run by the Health and Safety Executive and why we have given the HSE the resources that it asked for in the last public expenditure round.

Safety in the construction industry is relevant to the debate on the Employment Bill which is currently before the House. I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a specific debate in the immediate future, but I will bear his point in mind.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): With regard to the Government's proposals for the future of the National Health Service, will my right hon. Friend please ensure that just for once the proposals are made known to the House at least at the same time as, and not after, they are made known to the BBC and the press?

Mr. Wakeham: I share my hon. Friend's disapproval of leaks from wherever they may come. While this is not a matter entirely under my control, I will do my best.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I express the hope that there will be a carefully prepared reply to my question as well? May we have a debate on the scandalous conduct of Westminster city council? Does the Leader of the House think that it is right that Westminster city council should award a £78,000 consultancy contract to Messrs Touche Ross when a partner in that company is the district auditor charged with the responsibility for investigating the scandal of the sale of Westminster's cemeteries? Is there not a clear conflict of interest, and should not the Government step in and put an end to this nonsense?

Mr. Wakeham: It is not primarily a matter for the Government. It is understood that the contract to which the hon. Gentleman refers has been discussed with the Audit Commission in accordance with the code of local government audit practice approved by Parliament. The commission is satisfied that it constitutes no threat to the auditor's independence. Once again, the hon. Gentleman's wild allegations do not stand up to inspection.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): When the Leader of the House reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he may be amazed to note that his hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) told the House during Northern Ireland questions that the blazing row between the Prime Minister and Mr. Haughey concerning extradition has been resolved. If that is true—and the Leader of the House is in a position to find that out—will he see to it that the House

debates that matter at the first opportunity so that we may all know how the row was resolved, the compromises that were made, and what is to happen to Mr. Ryan?

Mr. Wakeham: I give the hon. Gentleman my assurance that I shall read *Hansard* tomorrow, and when I am reminded of what was said I shall determine the appropriate course of action.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Leader of the House will be aware of the serious economic situation confronting the fishing industry as a result of lower total allowable catches and high interest rates. Given the small number of opportunities that right hon. and hon. Members representing fishing constituencies have to debate such matters, should not another debate be arranged in Government time, when the responsible Ministers can give their estimates of the economic damage done in terms of lost jobs and lost output that will be suffered by fishing areas resulting from the Government's policies?

Mr. Wakeham: If we are able to organise such a debate, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will present a more balanced account of the situation than he managed to give in his question to me. He must acknowledge the substantial success achieved by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the negotiations, when the United Kingdom's share of total allowable catches suffered less than those of many other Community countries. However, it is an important issue, and, although I cannot promise an early debate, I shall bear the matter in mind.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Does my right hon. Friend share the increasing concern felt even among supporters of abortion law reform, such as myself, about the terms of the private Member's motion in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), which is to be debated on Friday 20 January? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that motion, calling as it does for unlimited parliamentary time to be allocated to a private Member's Bill, represents a fundamental and far-reaching change in our parliamentary arrangements? Does he accept that the debate on that issue should be kept separate from the abortion issue itself, and that it would be wise to make use of a different procedure rather than a private Member's motion?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I have read the private Member's motion on today's Order Paper to which he refers, but whether it is in order is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, not me. However, we should consider carefully before seeking to amend Standing Orders through private Members' motions. I shall say no more at this stage, but if I catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, during the debate in question I shall seek to elaborate.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) mentioned the many deaths and serious accidents occurring in the construction industry. Is the Leader of the House aware that that situation is common to many industries? Will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Employment to come to the Dispatch Box and tell the House that he will do something about ensuring that there is a proper number of safety inspectors to do the job which would help to solve the problems?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is not being fair. Of course there are difficulties, but the steps that the Government have taken to support the Health and Safety Executive to do what can be done is to be commended, not criticised. I have said that this is a right and proper subject for debate, but I cannot arrange one in the immediate future.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Since my right hon. Friend will be aware that we are all anxious to expedite the privatisation of Short Brothers, and since the company, which is wholly owned by the Government, will apparently require capitalisation to the tune of many hundreds of millions of pounds, can he say what legislative procedure will be necessary to place the company in the private sector?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I cannot, because the arrangements have not yet been made. There is nothing that I can add to what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), said in answer to a question earlier today, but we shall be able to address any legislative needs when the proposals have been finalised.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): The Leader of the House will recall that the Secretary of State for Transport told me during questions on his statement on the tragic air crash on the M1 that four aircraft with the same engines would be grounded. He has said since then that a considerable number of other aircraft have been grounded, although he has not told the House. Should there not be a further statement from him immediately, not on the results of the inquiry, which we must await, but on what is to be done to quell the fears of travellers and air crew about other aircraft while awaiting the results of that inquiry, because those fears are great and they are continuing?

Mr. Wakeham: The answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) during Prime Minister's Questions today should clearly be taken into account by everybody in order to lessen speculation. I do not think that there is need for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement, but I shall refer the hon. and learned Gentleman's point to him to see whether he feels it necessary to say anything further.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend refer at some stage to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's interesting decision to cut off funds payable to Hackney council under section 11 of the Local Government Act? Does he agree that it is now time that the House had a general debate about the activities of the race relations industry which would be of particular interest to Wolverhampton where, following the death of a West Indian, Clinton McCurbin, the officers of the council for community relations used their position as public servants to attack the police in a wild and unwarranted way and were not even prepared to accept the verdict of the coroner's inquest?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises important issues. I wish that I could be more forthcoming about a debate in Government time so that he could expand on the points

[Mr. Wakeham]

that he has made, but he might seek to raise some of those matters on an Adjournment debate, which would not exclude the possibility of a debate in Government time if I could find such time, but I cannot be too optimistic.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Since the Government are supposed to be opposed to terrorism, why are we being represented at the funeral of Hirohito, one of the most notorious terrorists of all time? Does that not reek of double standards? Surely there should be an early debate to consider this important matter.

Mr. Wakeham: No, that is not necessary. The Government, and indeed the British people, have repaired many difficulties of the past, and good relations between the United Kingdom and Japan are in everybody's interests.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): May I refer my right hon. Friend to the report on private Bill procedure produced by the Select Committee so ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson)? Does he agree that the report contains important recommendations that merit early and full debate in the House, and can he offer us the prospect of an early debate on that subject?

Mr. Wakeham: I have been even more forthcoming than that. I have suggested that I am seeking to arrange a debate before the Government respond to that report so that the House may have a chance to express views on an important and complicated set of proposals. I hope to arrange that in the fairly near future.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Is the Leader of the House aware that the spokesman for the private sponsors of the proposed Gateshead city technology college has said that the aim of the school will be to educate children for the needs of business? Will he arrange for an early statement to be made by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in which he can assure the House that the aim of school education, especially for children up to 16 years old, is to educate the whole person and to prepare young children for the whole of their lives—not merely to turn out fodder for the temporary needs of business?

Mr. Wakeham: I should have thought that giving people an education that enabled them, among other things, to compete in today's highly competitive world was desirable. I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend—but I cannot promise an early debate.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, unlike the Opposition, many of his hon. Friends are deeply reassured that the Football Spectators Bill will be starting in another place? Hopefully, it can be sunk without trace there and will not need to surface here.

Will my right hon. Friend give us back our slot for European questions? Perhaps not 80 per cent. of our legislation will be decided in Europe, but much of it will be. My right hon. Friend is deeply aware of the democratic deficit, and yesterday, in the one week in four when we have European questions, not one of them was reached.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend prefaced his reasonable question with a sentence that was not particularly helpful in his getting a favourable reply.

The previous arrangement, whereby a 20-minute slot was provided within Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Question Time, was agreed through the usual channels. That was subsequently changed to the current arrangement following further discussions through the usual channels. If right hon. and hon. Members generally hold the view that the current arrangements should be changed, discussions could be held again through the usual channels to determine whether that meets with general acceptance.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Leader of the House promised us a debate on the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure. When will we have that debate? In the meantime, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that British Rail is making an announcement today or tomorrow about the siting of the second London terminal for the Channel tunnel, a decision that has widespread strategic implications for the whole of London and the south-east. It is being introduced through the private Bill procedure, which underlines how urgent it is to have a debate and to do something about the way in which that procedure is being used to circumvent all the planning procedures established by this House and used throughout the country.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the issue being considered by British Rail. I told my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) that I hoped to arrange a debate in the not-too-distant future on the general subject of the way in which we handle private Bills in this House. That is an important subject, and we need to debate it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Bearing in mind my constituents' long suffering at the hands of Ealing council, may we have an early and specific debate on the action of that council, which now proposes to increase rates by 35 per cent. in the coming year, having already increased them by 65 per cent. two years ago? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the extreme suffering of pensioners, disabled people and many others, about whom the Labour party on Ealing council professes to care so much, as a result of these wicked arrangements?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the whole House is grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this matter. I wish it were possible to arrange a debate in the near future. I cannot do that in Government time, but my hon. Friend is ingenious at raising such matters in the House, and I am sure that he will give them the airing they need.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Leader of the House been informed that the Secretary of State for the Environment is reconsidering the Torbay ballot on the selling of council houses, for which only 16 per cent. voted in favour? As it looks as though there will be a re-run ballot, may we take it for granted that, in line with the practice used by the Government against local authorities, since the Government have made a mistake in the legislation the cost of the re-run will be paid for by the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question, but I shall certainly refer it to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Sheffield, Hallam Liberals have been sending me cheques for monitoring my speeches? Is it not time that we had a debate on this in case Short money, which is public money, is being used for such purposes?

Mr. Wakeham: I did not know that the Liberals in Sheffield had been sending my hon. Friend cheques for monitoring his speeches. No one sends me cheques for monitoring mine. However, I can understand that in Sheffield they believe that my hon. Friend's speeches are so good that they deserve that sort of support. I would find it hard to believe that that was the purpose for which Short money was given—or that that was what it was being used for.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is widespread support for just one initiative announced last year by the former Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—the proposal to impose a ban on the production and sale of a form of chewing tobacco that goes under the trade name Skoal Bandits? Will there be an early opportunity for the House to consider regulations that would impose such a ban?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know of any proposals. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Bearing in mind the serious catalogue of murders in the Province of Northern Ireland, will the Leader of the House consider giving time for a full-scale debate on security there? My constituency has bourne the brunt of attacks along the border, recently and for many years. In the Castlederg area at least 20 members of the security forces have been murdered, yet not one person has been brought to justice or found guilty of those murders. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman can understand the frustration and fear with which people living in the border areas have had to exist for many years.

Mr. Wakeham: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. I fully understand his feelings and those of his colleagues in Northern Ireland about the difficulties with security. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as one of his prime concerns, continually tries to improve the arrangements. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not take it amiss if I tell him that it is difficult to see how I can arrange a debate in the immediate future—although the subject is worthy of proper discussion in the House when time is available.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Minister think it appropriate that we should have an immediate debate on the dangerous practice of carrying chemicals by air? Following the importation into this country of 27 tonnes of PCBs from Canada to a spot near my constituency, I have been carrying on a long and detailed correspondence with the Department of Transport.

I was alarmed this morning to receive a letter which agreed that these products cannot be properly safeguarded in a crash or fire but said that the Government intended to do nothing about that. The letter seemed to suggest that PCBs would not survive an air crash. If they had been on board the aircraft that crashed over Lockerbie, they would not have survived. They would have changed into dioxins and dibenzofurons. A situation like that at Seveso might have recurred, and large tracts of country would have been unhabitable for decades. The Department of Transport does not think that this is a serious problem. Is it not time that this House told it that it is?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman knows much more about this than I do, but I do not think he has correctly interpreted my right hon. Friend's position. He is concerned about the possible release of dioxins in the extreme temperatures of a fire. As a first step—by which I mean the first from this moment—he will discuss with the Health and Safety Executive and the Civil Aviation Authority whether to propose an international review through the ICAO.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the Prime Minister's significant statement at Question Time today that the Government are taking active steps to prevent British firms from participating in the building of the chemical warfare establishment in Libya, could we have a debate next week to enable the House of Commons to send a simple message to the other EEC countries that their Governments, particularly Germany, should follow exactly the same course? Appalling problems are created by chemical warfare. If the EEC is meant to stand for freedom and liberty, is there no procedure whereby that course could be followed, with the Government's splendid example being sent as a clear message to the other EEC countries?

Mr. Wakeham: The fact that I cannot arrange a debate next week does not mean that the Government are not pursuing these matters within the EEC with great determination and fortitude.

Points of Order

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At Question time today you took a point of order from my colleague the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). Later on, during Question Time, you took other points of order. The result was that three minutes of the precious time that we have for Northern Ireland questions were taken up with points of order. I have been in this House on other days during Question Time when you have ruled that you would take points of order after Question Time. Will you please follow that procedure for Northern Ireland and give us the three precious minutes that we need each fortnight, together with the other time allocated to us, to handle affairs of great importance in our Province?

Mr. Speaker: When a point of order is raised with the Chair, it must be taken if it requires immediate attention. That is what I did today. I fully agree with the hon. Member that if it is not a genuine point of order it merely wastes time. I hope that that will not occur. I am, nevertheless, bound to take points of order when they are raised, to determine whether they require immediate attention.

Autumn Statement

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 9510/87 on the creation of a European Financial Area and the supplementary explanatory memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 20 June 1988 and 6427/88 on medium-term financial support for member states' balance of payments.]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to move the motion on the Autumn Statement, I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. In view of the number of right hon. and hon. Members who have said that they wish to participate in the debate, I propose to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock.

4.11 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 1st November 1988; endorses the action taken by Her Majesty's Government to ensure that inflation resumes its downward trend; welcomes the prospect of continued growth and strong investment as the basis for maintaining the trend of rising employment; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the continuing reduction in the share of national income pre-empted by public expenditure.

The whole House owes a debt of gratitude, once again, to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) whose Committee has produced a report on the Autumn Statement.

One matter which greatly exercised my right hon. Friend and his colleagues was the manifest shortcomings of a number of the published economic statistics. As he knows, the Government share this concern, and set up a scrutiny of Government economic statistics. That first stage is now complete, and the Government are now considering the findings. A comprehensive report will be published in due course.

In recent years, it has become customary for me to use the occasion of this debate, on the Autumn Statement, to announce the date of the Budget. I am happy to follow that precedent, and inform the House that the Budget this year will be on Champion hurdle day, 14 March—that is, in a little under nine weeks' time. Right hon. and hon. Members opposite will no doubt wish to make a note of this in their official Labour party filofaxes, which I see were among the prizes to be won in the 1988 Labour party Christmas lottery—along with a Black sea cruise for the Ron Todd wing of the party.

As usual, the Budget will be the occasion to announce the rates of taxation for the coming year and the projected size of the public sector borrowing requirement—or, to be accurate, in the new era which our prudent fiscal policy has ushered in, the size of the public sector debt repayment, or Budget surplus. What it is not is an occasion for announcing changes in public expenditure. Our public spending plans for the coming year were announced in the Autumn Statement, which we are debating today.

The House will be aware that public spending in the current year is likely to be the lowest which it has been, expressed as a share of total national income, for more than 20 years, with a further decline in the ratio likely in the years ahead. This has been achieved by sticking firmly to the planning total published in last year's public expenditure White Paper, while ensuring, within that total, significant extra money for priority programmes, from the Health Service to roads. Overall public spending has been further contained by the reduction in the burden of debt interest that flows directly from the transformation of the massive Budget deficit which we inherited from the party opposite—equivalent to some £25 billion in today's terms—into a substantial Budget surplus.

I will leave other aspects of public spending to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who will be winding up this debate—if, Mr. Speaker, he is fortunate enough to catch your eye—and who so skilfully conducted last year's public spending round. I would only add that firm but common-sense control of public expenditure remains, as it has always been, central to our economic strategy and a major contributor to the economic success which we are now enjoying. It is a success widely acknowledged by British business and industry, who have seen productivity and profitability improve beyond recognition, and now have the confidence to invest on an unprecedented scale.

It is a success, too, widely recognised abroad, where Britain's standing has never been higher. One sign of this is that last year, despite a substantial current account deficit on the balance of payments, the pound stayed strong and our foreign exchange reserves ended the year at an all-time high; and of course it is a success widely enjoyed by the British people, who see steadily rising living standards, more people in work than ever before in our history and inflation far lower than it was under Labour.

Indeed, only Labour has failed to recognise the transformation that has occurred to the British economy. As even *Pravda*, which I know the Opposition read carefully, was obliged to point out in an article on Britain last month:

"the Left have been in retreat for ten years, unable to respond to the Thatcher challenge, unable to adapt to life in the 1980s."

One of the key reasons why we have been able to achieve this long-term success is that we have never shirked taking the measures which are necessary to deal with short-term problems, even if those measures were unpopular. Getting the economy right does not mean that there will never be problems. That idealised state of affairs is not for this world.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lawson: I shall give way in a moment.

What it does mean is getting the fundamentals right, which we have done, and then tackling short-term problems effectively and decisively, as and when they emerge.

Mr. Ewing: I am anxious to ask the Chancellor a question before he passes from the section of his speech in which he deals with his success as Chancellor. Interest rates are higher now than they were when he became Chancellor, inflation is higher than it was when he became Chancellor, and people are finding it much more difficult to meet their mortgage payments than they were when he became Chancellor. Does he claim the credit, or does he take the blame for that?

Mr. Lawson: I have to tell the hon. Member—although I know that many of his hon. Friends on the Front Bench

do not understand this—that interest rates inevitably fluctuate. They have fluctuated before and they will fluctuate again.

In particular, sound management of the economy means acting firmly to deal with the sort of inflationary pressures that emerged in the second half of last year, when it became clear that total spending in the economy was growing at a wholly unsustainable rate. That is why interest rates have had to rise.

As every schoolboy should know by now, there is no way in which inflation can be controlled other than by a sufficiently tight monetary policy, and that means having the courage to raise interest rates as and when it is necessary to do so. There is nothing new in this—nothing new at all. It is what all other successful countries do. It is what we—unlike the disastrous inflationary Labour Government who preceded us—have always been prepared to do, and have consistently made clear we would continue to do, throughout the 10 years since we first took office.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lawson: In a moment.

As a result, the underlying rate of inflation, as measured by the RPI excluding the distorting effect of mortgage interest payments, which reached 5 per cent. in July, is likely to edge up a little over the next few months, perhaps to the 5·5 per cent. or so which it reached during the last inflation blip in 1985. But then, just as it did in 1985, it will start coming down again. Let there be no doubt about that whatever. Monetary policy works, and the passage in the official Opposition amendment before us today, urging us to "combat inflation" and "move interest rates downwards" betrays that irredeemable economic illiteracy that is their hallmark in every economic debate which we have ever had.

Mr. Wareing: The Chancellor said that the Government, and indeed any responsible Chancellor, should not veer away from any unpopular decisions. Why was it that, before the last Budget, Robin Leigh-Pemberton, that famous Left-wing Governor of the Bank of England, advised the Chancellor on a cautious Budget? Why did the Chancellor not take his advice then? Why is he not taking his advice now when making a statement in advance of the Budget?

Mr. Lawson: My conversations with the Governor of the Bank of England are amiable, cordial and private. I would like to express my thanks today for the dinner which the Governor of the Bank of England gave in my honour last night.

So far as the recorded RPI is concerned, the position is complicated by the fact that, of all 12 nations of the European Community, we are one of the only two—the other one being Ireland—that is daft enough to include mortgage interest payments in its retail price index. So, for example, next week's RPI figure for December would show a further rise of almost half a percentage point, simply because a mortgage rate fall made the December 1987 index artificially low, even if there were no change in underlying inflation at all.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): How can the Chancellor of a Government who make home ownership a fundamental objective of their policy say that the cost of home ownership is not relevant to an assessment of inflation by the majority of householders in this country?

Mr. Lawson: There are home owners in other European Community countries which even the deputy leader of the Liberal party—or whatever he is—ought to be aware of. As I said, of the 12 nations of the European Community, only two are foolish enough to have mortgage interest payments in their retail price index.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lawson: In a moment. I have just given way.

But to assert that monetary policy works—*[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition wishes to make a contribution or whether he is simply muttering from a sedentary position?

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): If the Chancellor wants to fool himself, that is up to him, but he must not fool the British people. He knows very well that every single comparable country in the OECD has included in its comparable figure with the retail price index a figure for the payment of expenditure on housing. He knows very well that those figures are directly comparable to the inclusion of mortgage figures.

Mr. Lawson: It is again my task to seek to educate the Leader of the Opposition. Of the other 10 countries of the European Community that do not include mortgage interest payments, there is a minority, it is true, that do have as a proxy for the cost of owner-occupied housing—it is a minority—imputed rents. The majority have nothing at all. So the Leader of the Opposition was trying to mislead the House, no doubt through his own ignorance.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lawson: No. I have just given way to the Leader of the Opposition. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Sheldon *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Chancellor is not giving way.

Mr. Lawson: I am quite sure that the right hon. Gentleman would have made a much more telling intervention than that from the Leader of the Opposition. I am afraid that I had to choose which one I was giving way to, and I chose the Leader of the Opposition. I must now carry on with my speech.

But to assert that monetary policy works is not to say that we are relying on monetary policy alone. It is a matter of not being afraid to use monetary policy where monetary policy is called for. But of course it is buttressed by the firmest fiscal stance of any Government since the war: for the first time for at least half a century we have a Government in this country that are engaged in repaying the national debt, and will continue to do so next year too. It is this immensely strong fiscal position that guarantees that the historic tax reforms and tax reductions in last year's Budget—for which I make no apology whatever—will remain fully in place, to the immense benefit of the British economy in the years to come.

[Mr. Lawson]

I understand full well that the Opposition do not like it. What they want—what they have always wanted—is to see income tax put up. That is why they voted against each and every reduction in income tax—each and every one of them.

I recognise, of course, that the rise in interest rates will mean that people with mortgages will have to curb their spending on other things, in a minority of cases considerably, in order to meet the higher mortgage payments. Indeed, the policy would not be working if this were not so, and there are growing signs that it is working.

But the Opposition's charges that the Government have been deliberately stoking up borrowing, apparently by keeping interest rates persistently too high, again betray their irredeemable economic illiteracy. What we have done is to give people the freedom to choose how much to borrow, in the light of what they think they can afford. That judgment has to take account of the fact that mortgage rates do go up and down, as I told the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) earlier.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lawson: Later.

Responsible people know this—even though the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), whom I am glad to see in his place, evidently does not, judging from his recent pronouncement on behalf of the Opposition Front Bench about

"home buyers who budgeted sensibly in taking out their mortgages, who mortgaged themselves up to the hilt".—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 423.]

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Chancellor accept that some people borrow money for the simple reason that they need to cover their costs and are forced into a great amount of debt? The Chancellor seems not at all concerned about that. Will he do anything about the expansion of credit in this country? This morning I received another invitation to spend £800 on a Visa card by 31 March to get two free tickets to America. Surely the Chancellor should do something about that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Take them."] If he lends me the money, I shall.

Mr. Lawson: I am afraid that I do not have the pleasure of knowing the hon. Gentleman sufficiently well to know whether he is capable of resisting temptation or not.

What we heard from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury was not sensible budgeting. That was Labour budgeting.

In a society which treats people like adults, it must be for individuals to decide for themselves how much it is sensible for them to borrow. That is the only way to a free and responsible society, and that in turn is the only way to a successful economy.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): When, in due course, as the Chancellor says, interest rates go down, will the exchange rate go down also? *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the Chancellor has knocked over his glass of water.

Mr. Lawson: I have a temporary liquidity problem.

I think that the hon. Gentleman is asking me to predict the course of exchange rates in some hypothetical circumstances. I am not even prepared to predict the course of exchange rates in less hypothetical circumstances, so I am not prepared to answer the hon. Gentleman. He has been in this House long enough to know that I never predict the course of either interest rates or the exchange rate.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I must move on a bit now.

As far as the impact of interest rates on companies is concerned, the plain fact is that companies are now in a far stronger financial position than they have been for a very long time.

Whereas, in 1980, company borrowing amounted to some 45 per cent. of the total value of their equity, by the end of 1987 it was down to around 28 per cent. At the same time, their profitability has been transformed: the rate of return on capital employed has trebled from 4 per cent. in 1980 to 12 per cent. now. Moreover, although short-term interest rates have risen considerably, long-term rates this time have barely moved at all. With the Government now actually redeeming some of their outstanding debt rather than making continuing demands on the markets, there are excellent opportunities for borrowers who wish to take advantage of this market for fixed-term and long-term borrowing. Last year, for example, there were over £10 billion of fixed-rate long-term sterling bond issues, and there is likely to be even greater scope this year.

Much concern has been expressed recently about the sharp fall in the personal savings ratio—the proportion of personal disposable income that is saved. It has certainly been dramatic. Equally certainly, high interest rates, which make savings more attractive and borrowing less attractive, are likely to reverse this trend—not least because the sharp fall in the personal savings ratio has been overwhelmingly caused by the sharp rise in personal borrowing, since savings are measured net of borrowing.

But it is important—this is not always fully understood—to set this in its proper perspective. The United Kingdom's overall national savings ratio has remained virtually unchanged throughout the 1980s, with the sharp fall in personal savings offset by a sharp rise in company savings as profitability has been transformed, coupled with the improvement in the public finances from deficit to surplus.

Even so, the strength of the recent investment boom has meant that total domestic investment exceeds total domestic savings, and the gap has therefore had to be financed from overseas. As a result, we have moved into sizeable current account deficit, with a surge in imports of capital goods and other materials for industry, superimposed on a slightly less rapid, but still considerable, growth in consumer goods imports.

But as savings rise in response to higher interest rates, particularly with the collapse of the housing boom, and as the growth of spending slows down from last year's peak, the current account deficit will narrow, although this process is bound to take time.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Savings may well rise as a result of high interest rates. Nevertheless, without prejudging his Budget, is the Chancellor prepared to use tax allowances and the tax system to stimulate personal savings, which are seriously low?

Mr. Lawson: Of course I note what the right hon. Gentleman has said, but he will not expect me to make any comments in advance of the Budget.

Two things are vital to the long-term success of an economy. One is a foundation of sound finance, and that is why, as I have explained, we are determined to take whatever action is necessary to deal with inflation. But what is equally important for economic growth, and hence for the prospects for jobs and for living standards, is the supply side of the economy—productivity, investment, and profits—and the transformation in the supply side of the British economy has been dramatic.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Before my right hon. Friend refers to the supply side of the economy, in respect of which he will have a good tale to tell, I agree fully with his view that fiscal policy should be medium-term and kept right away from the short-term aim of squeezing out inflation. In addition to high interest rates, what other instruments on the monetary policy side are necessary to control monetary aggregates? Other countries seem to have other weapons at their disposal. Sometimes, the impression that we are relying totally on interest rates and nothing else at all in monetary policy may be misleading.

Mr. Lawson: I think that, if my right hon. Friend, who has made a great study of many of the aspects of this, were to look at what other countries do, he would see that, whereas in the past some other countries have relied on direct credit controls of one kind or another, in every single case they have been abandoned. Look at the case of the United States, Canada, Japan, Germany—even France and Italy who now entirely rely on interest rates, and do not rely on direct credit controls, or anything else other than interest rates, in order to control their monetary policy, for the very good reason that, in a much more open world market and for the avoidance of distortions, that is really the only sensible way to proceed. As I said to my right hon. Friend, that is the practice of every other well-conducted economy nowadays.

Going back to the supply side, manufacturing productivity has grown far faster than in any other major nation in the 1980s, after growing slowest of all in the 1960s and the 1970s. Of course, the industrial relations scene is unrecognisable from the depths plumbed in the Labour Government's winter of discontent almost exactly 10 years ago. Profitability is at its highest levels for 20 years, and, partly as a result, Britain's investment performance has improved dramatically.

One of the reasons why we grew more sluggishly than any other major European country in the 1960s and 1970s was because we fell behind in investment. Comparing the rates of growth of investment in the 12 European Community countries, in the 1960s, we came ninth out of 12. In the 1970s, we slipped further, to tenth. But in the 1980s we have shot right to the top—an achievement that bodes well—very well indeed—for the future.

Within the economy, there has been a marked shift in the balance of growth, thus between investment and consumption. In the five years between 1968 and 1973, consumption grew by about 3 per cent. a year, and investment by about 2 per cent. a year. Between 1973 and 1978, the next five-year period, and again between 1978 and 1983, the five-year period after that, in both of those periods consumption grew slowly, and investment actually fell. That was the record of the Labour Government. But since 1983—since 1983—investment has grown at getting on for twice the rate of consumption, so that private sector investment now stands at 16 per cent. of GDP—the highest figure ever.

So much for what the Opposition like to call a short-lived consumer boom. What we have seen is a long-lived investment boom—and one which is set to continue, as the surveys from the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, and the Department of Trade and Industry all confirm.

The transformation—because that is what it is—of the supply side of the British economy has been the foundation for what is already the longest period of strong and steady growth, and the longest sustained fall in unemployment since the war; and Britain's economic renaissance is set to go on, although growth this year will be slower than in the past two years, particularly so far as domestic demand is concerned.

Perhaps the best evidence of the transformation of the supply side is the way the economy has forged ahead through the coal strike, through the oil price collapse, and through the stock market crash. There will be further evidence in the way that we shall come through the present problems about which I was speaking earlier. In the past, each and every one of these incidents would have created a major crisis. Now, they are little more than changes of pace in the sustained upward march of the British economy.

Our economic prospects will inevitably, of course—I do not deny this—depend to some extent on the wider world economy. The closer international co-operation which has been in place for well over three years now has, I am sure, been of great benefit in creating the right climate for healthy, non-inflationary growth, and particularly for investment. As the House will be aware, I was in Washington on Tuesday for an informal discussion with United States Treasury Secretary Brady, and I am sure that the new United States Administration will continue to play its full part in that process of international co-operation.

In this context, a low-profile meeting of the G7—the Finance Ministers and central bank governors of the seven major industrial nations—and of course the first involving the new United States Administration, may well take place within the next few weeks.

I have set out in the Autumn Statement the prospects for 1989, and I have explained the policies which I intend to pursue to ensure that our economic success continues. But when he comes to reply, I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) will have the honesty and the courage to set out his own party's policies as well. For in spite of all his very frequent speeches, letters to me and television appearances, the House, I have to say, is little clearer than it has ever been on what Labour's policy on the economy actually is.

We are still waiting to hear what they decided at their retreat into seclusion in a convalescent home at Rottingdean a few weeks ago. We are still waiting to hear the outcome from their much-vaunted policy review, which seems to have disappeared from sight.

But I must be entirely fair. That great economist, whom I miss so much, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), has published his proposal to solve all Labour's problems. He recognises that it has already lost the next election. So, on the principle that if he

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cannot win, he is not playing, he proposes that we split the country up into ever smaller units, until we eventually find one where Labour might hope to find a majority.

So now we know what at least one section of the Labour party offers the country—what I might term the Yugoslav solution: total devolution and total ungovernability. It was only appropriate that the entire Yugoslav Government resigned, because they could not find a way out of their economic difficulties, on the very day that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook produced his idea.

But let me come back to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who is with us, and ask him a straight question—in fact, two straight questions. *[Laughter.]* I shall ask him three, if he is not careful. First—I know that he does not want to listen but I want to ask him this straight question first—can he bring the House up to date on what Labour's tax policy actually is this week, and in particular what Labour's basic rate of tax would be? I realise that the hon. Gentleman may find this is a tiresome question but I have to say that it is of some interest to the House, and may be of some interest to the country too.

I shall remind the hon. Gentleman that Labour voted against the cut in the basic rate from 29 per cent. to 27 per cent. in 1987, and also against the cut from 27 per cent. to 25 per cent. in 1988.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: Yet, when he was pressed on the subject by Mr. Brian Walden a few days ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that, for the 95 per cent. of taxpayers who pay at the basic rate—and I quote from the transcript—

"the possibility of increasing their income tax is very, very remote".

However, I have to say that, when Mr. Walden then kindly offered to change the subject, the right hon. Gentleman exclaimed, "Thank God!"

Mr. Kinnock: Is that in the transcript?

Mr. Lawson: Yes it is.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will now confirm to the House, having heard what the leader of the Labour party said, that Labour now admits that it was wrong to vote against the cuts in the basic rate of income tax in 1987 and 1988.

Since we are debating the Autumn Statement and the Government's public expenditure plans, perhaps the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who has, I understand, rejoiced under the title of shadow Chief Secretary for over a year now, can tell us—this is my second question—by how much Labour would increase public expenditure in the unlikely event of their returning to office.

The House will want to hear a clear, honest and straightforward answer to that question, because the only policies we have heard from Labour, throughout the 1980s so far, have been a repeat of the disastrous policies which laid this country low in the 1970s, and would do so again, as the British people so clearly recognise. By contrast, the Autumn Statement offers the prospect of a further year of healthy growth and strong investment with inflation resuming its downward trend and above all, an economy that has been fundamentally transformed for the better. I commend it to the House.

4.44 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"declines to approve the Autumn Statement; deplores the failings in the Government's economic policies and the higher interest rates, higher inflation, the continuing high level of unemployment and worsening balance of payments these have caused; is concerned about the damaging impact of these policies on industry, home owners and low income families throughout the country; believes that the Autumn Statement does nothing to ensure a balanced economy and fails to ensure necessary improvements in essential public services; and calls upon the Government to adopt an economic strategy which will sustain growth, combat inflation, move interest rates downwards towards the levels of Britain's competitors and reduce the balance of payments deficit by improving export performance."

What we have just heard from the Chancellor of the Exchequer is the predictable response of a man who has just heard through the post that his last remaining policy—depending on high interest rates—has been rejected by his last remaining supporter—the Bank of England. He is the one-club man who has now become the one-man club.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Answer the questions.

Mr. Brown: I shall come to the questions in my own time.

The Chancellor made many boasts in his speech. He tells us that private investment as a share of the economy has not been higher since the 1960s. He fails to tell us that overall investment—the figure that matters—as a share of the economy has not been lower since the 1960s. He tells us that long-term interest rates have not moved at all. He fails to tell us that short-term interest rates are now 3 per cent. higher than in America, 5 per cent. higher than in Germany and 8 per cent. higher than in Japan. Our interest rates are among the highest in Europe.

Mr. Lawson: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that he is wrong. Total investment is, on the official figures, the highest for a quarter of a century and, according to outside analysts, is likely to be the highest figure ever as a proportion of GDP.

Mr. Brown: The right hon. Gentleman should consult the real figures. He has been wrong before and he is wrong now. Investment, as a share of the national income, is lower than it was in the 1960s and 1970s, and lower than in almost every European industrialised country, except Belgium.

The Chancellor tells us that manufacturing productivity is our best ever. He fails to tell us that the productivity of the labour force as a whole is less than it was during most of the 20 years before he took office. When boasting about productivity throughout the world, he fails to tell us that our growth in productivity has been half that of Japan. Those are the real figures.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I wonder how that can be. Manufacturing output is now 10 per cent. higher than it was in 1979 and, on the Opposition's thesis, the number of unemployed is higher now than it was then. Surely it must follow that productivity is greater now than it was in 1979.

Mr. Brown: Of course it has been possible for most years under this Government to show higher productivity because less has been produced by fewer people. The figure

that I was putting to the Chancellor is that if one compares our record on productivity in all sectors of the economy with that of Japan, one can see that our productivity has been rising by half as much. The Chancellor will have to come to the House to correct his figure at a later date.

I suspect that we have heard from the Chancellor one half of the Government's case on the economy, reflecting much of the weekend thinking in his get-together at Dorneywood. Perhaps later in the debate we shall hear from the Chief Secretary, who is in a position to report on the more important meeting with the Prime Minister at Chequers on Boxing day. I understand from a report in the *Sunday Telegraph* that, under the auspices of the Prime Minister, the get-together included the previous Chancellor, the assistant to the Chancellor and the next Chancellor. I suppose that we must wait to hear from the Chief Secretary on that subject. Perhaps he will show more concern than the Chancellor did for the problems faced by people because of high interest rates. After all, as a Back Bencher in 1982 he told the then Chancellor that the level of interest rates was simply "not tolerable". That intolerable level of interest rates was 9·5 per cent. 3·5 per cent. lower than today.

It is clear from what the Chancellor said this afternoon that he does not begin to understand the scale and significance of the problems facing millions of people. A few weeks ago he told the press that he believed in targeting. With his enthusiasm for high interest rates, he has targeted industry—the borrowing costs of which have increased by £1·3 billion—small businesses—company bankruptcies in 1988 were higher than in 1987, even before the latest wave of interest-rate rises—and most of all, home owners. The average home owner has had to pay an extra £40 a month since last summer's interest rate rises. The young first-time buyer has experienced rises of £50 a month, and the home buyer in the south-east has experienced rises of £70 a month. The reason why home owners are stretched to the limit is that throughout the nine and a half years that the Government have been in office mortgage rates have never been below 9·5 per cent., and they have been below 10 per cent. on only two occasions.

As interest rates rise yet again, more of each householder's income, for reasons beyond his control, will be spent on his home. The added burden facing families can be expressed in two figures. Ten years ago the typical home owner paid 14 per cent. of take-home pay to cover housing costs, while today it is 24 per cent.—nearly twice as much. It is not a careful Chancellor whose meticulous housekeeping has been knocked off course by imprudent home owners, but careful home owners whose budgeting has been knocked off course by an imprudent Chancellor. Home owners, small businesses and industry should know that their mortgage rises and higher borrowing costs are not some accidental by-product of the Chancellor's strategy—they are the strategy.

The Chancellor has decided that the problems facing him are to be solved at the expense of home owners, small businesses and industry. The price of his economic mistakes are to be paid by those who secured least benefit from the top-rate tax cuts in the Budget. What is the Chancellor's response? He told us today that people will have to curb spending on other items. Perhaps in the Chancellor's world people can cut back on second homes, the third car or the third or fourth holiday, but in the wider world an increasing minority are finding that the sole car is harder to pay for, that their annual holiday is under threat and that they are struggling to pay the mortgage on the one family home. The Chancellor protests that his interest-rate strategy is right because he cannot afford to admit that his Budget strategy was wrong.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that, despite what he says, the man on average earnings is £45 a week better off than he was in 1979?

Mr. Brown: Standards of living have risen in every decade. The hon. Gentleman should ask whether standards of living can be sustained at their present level. The answer for millions of home owners is that they cannot and that they will be worse off as a result of rises in their mortgages. If the hon. Gentleman does not believe me, why does he not ask some of his constituents about the notes that they have received from building societies over the past few weeks? The Chancellor will not make a change in his fiscal strategy because when the interests of a tiny minority of taxpayers clash with the economic interests of the nation, the interests of the small minority come first.

Last week, following the mortgage rate rises, new dental charges were introduced, train fares increased by 9 per cent. and tube fares increased by 12 per cent. Electricity prices will rise by 6 per cent., following the 9 per cent. increase last year, and in April the price of gas will increase. The price of water will increase to pay for privatisation. When those rises—which on average will amount to an extra £10 a month if rates or the poll tax are included—have wiped out the tax cuts of the majority of families, what is left of the Chancellor's boast to a Conservative party conference in 1984:

"On this occasion, unlike all previous recoveries, there has been no resurgence of inflation"?

The right hon. Gentleman told the IMF:

"In previous cycles, inflation has tended to rise as soon as the recovery has become well established. As a result, many commentators have argued that an inflation upturn in the United Kingdom is imminent. We take a different view."

The Chancellor cannot blame the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries or rises in world commodity prices. He has no one but himself to blame. As inflation increases to 7 per cent., when it is less than 2 per cent. in Japan, predicted to be 3 per cent. in Germany and predicted to be 4·5 per cent. in America and Canada, what does the Chancellor say about his objectives? *[Interruption.]* I tell the Chancellor that, in the last year of the Labour Government, inflation was at the European average. Under this Government it is 40 per cent. above the European average. This will be the fourth year when inflation has been above it, but this is the Chancellor who told us that he would create zero inflation. On 18 December, the right hon. Gentleman said, when asked about zero inflation:

"It will take a long time to get there . . . The important thing is to be moving in the right direction."

The Chancellor's only solution is to change the rules by taking mortgage interest rates out of the retail prices index. In a year or two, he—or more likely his successor—will tell hon. Members that, like the unemployment problem before the last election, the inflation problem has been solved, no doubt after 19 changes in the retail prices index.

The Chancellor says that these rises are a temporary blip on the road to zero inflation. The temporary blip occurred. not when inflation rose above 5 or 6 per cent., but when it fell below 3 per cent. for four months in the 66

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months of his Chancellorship. The real blip under this Chancellor's term of office is the four months when inflation was below 3 per cent., the three months when Britain had a visible trade surplus and the two months when mortgage rates were below 10 per cent.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will the hon. Gentleman explain the blip that occurred under the Labour Government, when the average rate of inflation was 15·5 per cent.? It will return to that level if some of his policies are put into practice.

Mr. Brown: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has looked at his history. When the Labour Government left office, after a 300 per cent. rise in oil prices, inflation was falling. Under this Government, after a 20 per cent. drop in oil prices, it is rising.

What is the Chancellor's answer to every problem? His answer to rising consumption is high interest rates; to problems with the pound it is high interest rates; to inflation it is high interest rates; and, amazingly, to the regional problems it is high interest rates. A few days ago the Chancellor told the *Financial Times* that interest rates are

"helping to secure a better regional balance within the economy."

I know that something had to be done to replace the lost regional grants, the lost regional status and the cut in the development agencies, but industrialists in my constituency are amazed at being told that their economy is in need of being cooled down, when it has not begun to warm up. They strongly believe that high interest rates will force them to move from a period of recession to depression without enjoying an intervening period of recovery.

The Chancellor would do well to listen to the Secretary of State for Wales, who, regarding the policy of high interest rates, was quoted in *The Scotsman* on Monday 5 December as saying:

"There is a whole range of things that can be used. I do not think you can ever run an economy dependent on any single factor alone."

That was said by a man who is not only a Conservative Member, but a member of the Cabinet. He, apparently, can say that with impunity in front of the Prime Minister.

What has happened to the Chancellor's strategy? What has happened now that he is so enthusiastic about high interest rates? What has happened since the days when everything was going to be solved by M3, which is rising this year by 20 per cent. and in previous years by anything between 10 and 25 per cent., and which is rising faster than in Europe? What has happened to M3, because we hear nothing about that? What has happened to the statement that the Chancellor made in 1980 in the economic progress report:

"Judgments about appropriate levels of interest rates are replaced by control of the monetary base."?

What has happened to the view that interest rates should be left to the markets and not to the Government? The aim was for a

"greater role for the market in determining the rates."

What has happened to the presumption that if the public sector borrowing requirement came down interest rates would inevitably follow them?

Gone are the days when Treasury Ministers reported to us in the financial statement and Budget Report in 1981:

"The Government is committed to a progressive reduction in the growth of the money stock and to pursuing the fiscal policies necessary to achieve this without excessive reliance on interest rates."

The Minister who was most enthusiastic about the medium-term financial strategy, and the Minister who repudiated excessive reliance on interest rates in 1981, is today the Chancellor of the Exchequer who can think of little else.

After nine years, when we have been through fads of monetarism, the totems of M0, M3, the basket of monetary aggregates and all the dogma about PSBR, we are back to the crudest, most basic, old-fashioned, short-term weapon of them all—high interest rates. The Government do not have a resolute approach, but falter from one desperate expedient to another. They pursue the short-termism that is, I suppose, the inevitable result of an unequal dialogue between a Chancellor who has not yet made up his mind when to retire and a Prime Minister who has not yet made up her mind when to sack him.

Our case against the Chancellor is not merely that without a prior and sustained long-term investment boom the consumer boom that he engineered was bound to be unsustainable. Our case is not only that the solution that he has chosen—high interest rates—is not only directly damaging to industrial investment, as everybody knows, is directly damaging to home owners and fails to address the real problems facing us—for what can high interest rates do about skill shortages, bottlenecks in technology or regional imbalances?—but that his excessive reliance on interest rates is worsening the economy and that the imbalances in the economy will only be exacerbated by the high interest rate policy that he pursues.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Where has the hon. Gentleman obtained his figures from when he says that investment has been at a low level in recent years? The burden of the hon. Gentleman's case against my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is based on phoney figures. Total investment in 1988 was at high levels relative to the 1970s. Would the hon. Gentleman like to show us his alternative figures so that we can judge their veracity against the official record?

Mr. Brown: I find the comments of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) interesting. After all, he was the hon. Member who suggested about a year ago that the Chancellor should consider pumping an extra £5 billion into the economy. If he checks the figures, he will find that, far from being an economic miracle akin to that of Japan, as the Chancellor says, the growth rate of investment in Britain has been about half the level of that in Japan since the Government came to office.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Brown: What is even worse about the Chancellor's strategy is that, after 10 years during which he has protested that we are living through an economic miracle akin to that of Japan, after 10 years during which he has boasted that our economic position is akin to that of Germany, not only have other countries manufactured more, produced more, grown faster and exported more but they have seen the wisdom—which the Chancellor clearly

has not, to judge from his Autumn Statement—of taking a pragmatic approach to public investment and to the public sector, for the future of the country.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I have given way on numerous occasions this afternoon. I am happy to give way to the Chancellor if he wants to intervene, but I want to press on with my remarks.

In which other countries would supply side investment in education, training, research and development in the regions take second place to a doctrinaire obsession to reduce public spending below a notional and arbitrary mark of 40 per cent. of national income? In the Autumn Statement, the Government should be examining what investment is being put in place, what skills are being developed, what technology is being encouraged and what resources generally are being mobilised to ensure that we are competitive for the 1990s. We know that over the past nine years we have been spending, in real terms, less on the regions industry, transport, housing and the environment.

In the Autumn Statement, despite the Chancellor's boasts, industry and housing find their expenditure cut, in real terms, by £400 million, employment and energy by £300 million, Scotland by £200 million, the environment by £100 million and spending on education, Wales and Northern Ireland is so important to this Government that it is to take up a far smaller share of national income.

The Chancellor claims that he has managed to reduce public spending as a share of national income and to increase public spending at the same time. I shall tell him how he can claim that. The main reason why he claims he is spending more next year is that he has spent less this year than was originally planned. Once all the receipts are in, it is likely that public spending will have fallen, not by £1 billion, as is said in the Autumn Statement, but by about £2·5 billion over the year. The truth is that, for all the talk of increased spending, the real value of allocated departmental spending for all those functions is worth less next year than it has been in many of the years since 1983. There is no extra money for industry, for housing or for the environment.

There are, of course, a few exceptions—which are mainly unintentional. The £200 million for income support for pensioners is a result of the Chancellor giving a weekend briefing that went wrong. The £20 million, or more, is the result of a junior Health Minister giving a weekend interview that upset farmers. If any lesson is to be learnt, it is that our best, and perhaps only, hope of more public cash for interest groups and industry is that the relevant Minister is tempted into an indiscreet weekend interview.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman may have forgotten that I asked him two simple straight questions. I should like now to hear his answers. First, he has seen our figures in the Autumn Statement. By how much would Labour increase the total of public expenditure—by how much? Secondly, what basic rate of income tax would it need to finance that?

Mr. Brown: I do not know what the problem is for the Chancellor. The Labour party is, of course, committed to increased public investment. The Chancellor himself was committed to that last year, but the only problem was that he did not spend the money that he promised to spend. I see from the Budget submission that even the Institute of Directors is demanding more public spending because of the chronic under-funding of education and health.

I can assure the Chancellor that we believe in more public investment, and to make that possible we would have a different fiscal strategy from the strategy that the Chancellor is pursuing. Before the Chancellor tells us that last year's Budget was a success and that there is no need to change the fiscal stance, he should talk to home owners, who have seen their tax cuts wiped out many time over as a result of his policy.

The main reason why investment represents a smaller share of our national income is that, year after year, the Chancellor has insisted on giving a low priority to public investment. The real value of Government investment fell in 1987, and the published figures show that it also fell in the first three quarters of 1988. Is it not a damning comment on the Government that in the motion they should congratulate themselves on bringing public expenditure below 40 per cent. of GDP, even though that means that public investment in our future has fallen?

Where is the basis for congratulation in the fact that there has been less spending on research and development, when we know that other countries are running ahead of us? We know that other countries have more research scientists than we do. Where is the basis for congratulation in the fact that many major companies in this country are having to recruit graduates from abroad because of the skill shortages caused by lack of investment in training? Where is the basis for self-congratulation in the neglect and decay of the infrastructure that has occurred as a result of the public expenditure policies that the Chancellor has pursued?

Sir Peter Hordern: The hon. Gentleman said that the level of public sector investment had fallen last year compared with previous years. Has he taken into account the denationalisation of British Gas and other public sector investments? If he were to make a proper comparison, he would find that total investment had risen.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to point this out. *[Interruption.]* The Chief Secretary says that I am wrong. I have to tell him that my figures from 1979 exclude public corporations. We are talking about general Government investment. Local authority and Government investment fell last year and the year before, yet the Government and the Chancellor congratulate themselves in the motion on presiding over this fall in public investment.

The Chief Secretary knows all about these things. He knows that the biggest increase in spending has been not on the National Health Service, roads or education but on Government advertising. What we need is action to deal with the problems of the inner cities, science space and the environment, but all that we get is Government advertising. What happened to the initiative that the Prime Minister launched in St. James's park—amid great advertising—the aim of which was to clean up the environment? What happened to the committee to push scientific research, which the Prime Minister was to chair? What happened to the initiative to help women?

What new measure has followed the trumpetings of Prime Ministerial enthusiasm for the global environment? What has happened to the inner-city campaign, which appears to have started and ended with the publication of

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that glossy brochure last March? What has changed since September 1987, when the Prime Minister did a walkabout on the wasteland in Midlesbrough to launch the inner-city campaign? What was wasteland in 1987 remains a wasteland in 1989, and the only opportunities created in Middlesbrough were photo opportunities. I am sure that the people of Middlebrough treasure the snapshots still.

We need a policy to cope with the problems that we face—not publicity or public relations. This is the Government who promised the initiative for women, but ended up freezing child benefit. They said that they would deal with the environment, but ended up cutting the money spent on research into pollution. They set out promising to regenerate inner cities, and ended up lavishing top-rate tax cuts on the landed estates. They are a Government whose priority is not the consumer, the inner city, pensioners or the family, but the top-rate taxpayer.

Let me tell the Chancellor what his priorities should be. First, he should admit that his last Budget was misconceived—that it was not only unfair and divisive but ill judged and imprudent. He should end excessive reliance on interest rates, no least by acting directly to encourage saving and on the inflation that he has created—in particular, by abandoning the electricity and water price increases. Above all, the Chancellor should set in motion a fiscal strategy that is not only fair but designed to reduce inflation, allow interest rates to fall and assist our balance of payments.

We have been told that the next Budget will be a Budget for savings. We were told that the last Budget was a Budget for savings.The huge tax cuts at the top were justified to the House on the pretext that top taxpayers would save, with the result that there would be more investment by them in the economy. We know that quite the opposite happened and that the savings ratio has now fallen to its lowest level.

If the Chancellor wants a real Budget for savings, why does he not end the discrimination against pensioners on income support and housing benefit, who are penalised for saving by the loss of that benefit? Why does he not end the discrimination against people too poor to tax who save with building societies and who are automatically taxed on their income? Why does he not create a savings scheme that will do something to promote real savings and real investments in the areas where they are most needed—in the regions? That is the first thing that the Chancellor should examine.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman should say now, at a time when it would have the most effect on interest rates, that in the current difficulties that he has created the British people cannot afford another Budget like the last one—a professedly tax-cutting Budget whose effects were quickly cancelled out by mortgage and price rises. Let me tell him directly that, if press reports are correct—if he intends to introduce measures to help the low-paid, to cure the poverty trap and to reduce the tax burden on low-income Britain, which is now heavier than it was in 1979—he will have the support of the Opposition for those measures. But even if tax allowances for low-income Britain are raised in line with wages, people will still be paying exactly the same share of their income in tax next year as they are this, and that represents a larger burden than existed in 1979. Would not the Chancellor be doing better if he took back at least part of the top-rate tax cuts that he gave to people who did not need them and who spent large parts of them on imports? In that way, he could take many thousands more out of tax.

Thirdly, will the Chancellor agree that with a prudent economic strategy that does not rely exclusively on high interest rates he could afford some targeted investment, especially on the regions? Such investment would not cause the inflation, the imports and the pressure on interest rates that his top-rate tax cuts have caused. Action on capacity constraints, skill shortages, technology and research, on regional imbalances and on infrastructure would not only assist greater balance in the economy, but would make for better long-term efficiency and competitiveness. Those are the measures that the Chancellor should consider introducing in a Budget.

No Chancellor has had better opportunities than this Chancellor. He has never had to deal with huge oil price rises. He has not had to deal with a world commodity price explosion. Instead, he has had huge oil revenues—more than £70 billion. He has had money from the privatisation of industry. He has had £20 billion from house and land sales. He has broken the link between pensions and earnings and thus saved himself £18 billion.

In spite of that, there is no supply side transformation. There is no zero inflation. The trade deficits are no freaks, the price rises are no blips, and the hardship that the Chancellor has imposed and is imposing is no accident. There is no economic miracle. This Government have had the best opportunities that have been available for decades but have left the nation ill prepared for the future. What we need is not just a new Chancellor, but a new Government, and the sooner the better.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order for me to move a vote of thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Higgins.

5.20 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): This year's Autumn Statement is in many ways more important than ever before, because it includes a considerable number of the figures and data normally included in the public expenditure White Paper. I believe that the House should be glad that the Chief Secretary, together with the Chancellor, has accepted the recommendations made by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service that the Autumn Statement should be expanded and given greater prominence.

I am sorry that I missed the opening sentences of the Chancellor's remarks, not least because I gather that he was kind enough to pay a compliment to the Treasury Committee. I hope that our report will help the House in analysing the complex economic problems we face.

I should like to take up one point arising from the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, (Mr. Brown). There was considerable disquiet on this side of the House about some of the statistics on which he based his argument. I suggest that he should, perhaps, adopt the policy used on similar previous occasions: he should put down some written parliamentary questions setting out precisely the points that he wishes to justify; then we could see what the official statistics actually are.

I believe that the report of the Select Committee helps to put the present situation in perspective, especially paragraph 49, which draws attention to the fact that the worldwide fear of recession after the stock market collapse in October 1987 led the authorities throughout the world to take action to avert that risk by stimulating their economies. I believe that this time last year, everyone—with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—was unanimous in believing that that was the right thing to do. That sets the background against which the present policies are to be appraised. The Committee goes on to say:

"With hindsight it can be seen that thereafter policy was too relaxed too long."

An important point made by the Select Committee was that there is grave concern about the margins of error that arise in official statistics, not in the context I have just mentioned, but regarding the overall national income statistics. I know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor feels that the financial statistics are better. That is so, but, if he is trying to manage the economy against a background where there are tremendous variations—large variations of the kind which were revealed in the evidence given to the Committee—in estimates of economic growth, depending on which measure one takes, it is important that we should devote more resources to it.

I note that my right hon. Friend said that he will be publishing the report of the inquiry. I welcome that, but the fact is that the position has deteriorated significantly since the Committee originally suggested that an inquiry was needed. Therefore, if one is to manage the economy properly, that is important.

A separate issue, but related to the one which I have just mentioned, is forecasts. The Chancellor said in evidence to us that he wished he did not have to publish the official forecasts of the economy. I believe that that is wrong: it is important that the House should know the forecasts on which the Government are taking their decisions, since otherwise we cannot have a sensible debate on these matters. In the light of that, I am sure it is important that we should do all we can to improve the forecasts. The pass record of the Treasury has been good on this, but the model is now clearly defective. As the Committee has pointed out, the model at the moment, for example, would produce a conclusion, if it were not adjusted, that if there is a fiscal surplus of the kind we now have, we would also have a surplus on the current account. When the difference is that big, clearly the forecasting model needs to be looked at closely.

The first point I wish to make from an analytical point of view is that the Committee points out that, against the background of the stimulus of last year and the consequential hangover, that the Chancellor is, in effect, on a tightrope, and that there are two dangers. On the one hand, the effect of the higher interest rates could be a sudden abrupt stop in the economy, so that the unemployment figures would cease to go down and the economy as a whole would come to a halt. On the other hand, if the economy delayed its response to the hike in interest rates, before effective response is felt, we might have a deterioration in foreign confidence, a fall in sterling, still higher interest rates and an uncontrollable situation.

The Chancellor is balanced on this tightrope, but he is still clearly in a position of balance. We do not yet know how long it will be before the interest rate increases become apparent in the economy. Although the last set of balance of payment figures were the third worst ever, they showed a significant fall in imports. The increase in the mortgage rate will take some time to have the effect which my right hon. Friend has rightly described. Essentially, one should not make a premature judgment for further action ahead of the Budget, but one should wait to see what the subsequent figures are.

There are particular points of concern regarding the balance of payments, because the Chancellor of the Exchequer rightly told us:

"with the exchange rate given the task of combating inflation, it follows that the exchange rate cannot be assigned the task of"

restoring equilibrium in the balance of payments. The Committee expressed concern about restoring that balance in the current account, because the Chancellor has effectively used the exchange rate as a means of putting that right. We expressed some doubt about whether the supply side improvements—which I believe are coming through—and the reduction in the strain on domestic demand will be sufficient to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for the resources to be diverted into exports.

I have two related puzzles. The first one relates to the recent comments on these issues by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. Of course, there is a puzzle about what rate of income tax he would select, to which I still believe we do not have an answer. The hon. Gentleman complains about the cut in the top rate of income tax in the last Budget, but I believe that he must take fully into account what happened to revenue following that cut.

While that is a normal party political point to make, I find it strange that the hon. Gentleman argued that the totality of tax cuts in the last Budget was too great, given the fact that we are now clearly heading for, by an enormous margin, the largest fiscal surplus that we have ever had. I believe that the only previous one was the one achieved by Roy Jenkins, which resulted in the immediate defeat of the Labour Government, but that was in different circumstances. I believe that the Chancellor is heading for a large surplus. It is the relationship between taxation and expenditure and the balance between the two which are important, and not simply what the Chancellor did last time on taxation. When one looks at that balance, one sees that there was a massive surplus. I do not believe that it is convincing to say that the tax cuts in the last Budget were too great.

Another related problem is that I am puzzled because my right hon. Friend is fond of repeating that he has only one weapon with which to deal with the problems of the economy—that of short-term interest rates. He does himself less than justice. Indeed, I detected some slight change of emphasis even this afternoon. Clearly, the use of short-term interest rates occurs against the background of the fiscal policy and stance which he has established. It is true that, under a Conservative Government, that changes only once a year, in contrast with the previous Labour Government. None the less, it is a weapon of great importance in managing the economy. I hesitate to use a corny analogy, but I do not agree that the Chancellor is using only one golf club; he is using a fiscal driver and putting with interest rates. That is a sensible way of dealing with these matters.

The Chancellor's fiscal stance, which he repeated this afternoon and gave the Committee in evidence, is tight, and that is extremely important. It also has relevance to what he can do eventually when we have the latest figures

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for the next Budget. If he were simply to offset the effect of fiscal drag in the Budget, there would be a tight fiscal stance. If he were not to give any reductions, it would be a significant tightening. My present feeling is that a choice between those two rather than a further relaxation would be right, because it is important that the fiscal policy should reinforce the operation of what the Chancellor is inclined to call his monetary policy but what is more accurately called his interest policy.

From the Autumn Statement and the caveats which are summarised in the Select Committee report, it seems that the Chancellor remains balanced on the tightrope. There is some equilibrium. Now it is important that we wait to see what effect interest rate increases have when they have worked their way fully through to the level of consumption and consuming expenditure—against a background where, clearly, the increase in mortgage rates will have considerable importance.

We debate these matters in different circumstances from those which existed a few years ago. For many years we had negative real interest rates, but now we have positive ones. Despite that, we have seen a remarkable fall in the personal savings ratio, which gives cause for anxiety. I hope that the Chancellor will do something to rectify that in his next Budget. Above all, we now have a completely different policy stance, as, instead of having a public sector borrowing requirement, we now have public sector debt repayment. That leads to the extraordinary jargon, which the report mentions—that we now have a policy not only of full funding of the deficit but of "full unfunding" of the repayment.

Given the overall position, we can reasonably say that the picture in the Autumn Statement, with massive additional resources for public expenditure, leads us to believe that, in the Budget, we shall again see that the Chancellor can continue with his present policy. In particular, the slowing down of the rate of growth from a clearly unsustainable and unintended level will result in a significant improvement in the country's overall welfare.

5.32 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): We must always pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) for the work that his Committee does on the Autumn Statement. I agree with what he said about the problems of inadequate statistics and the fear of inadequate capacity for exports in our industries, but I disagree with him on the effects of tax cuts.

In his comments to the *Financial Times*, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"No Government has done more to set out its policy and stick to it."

I find myself something like the ghost at the feast. Like the right hon. Gentleman, I recall the famous Financial Statement and Budget Report 1980-81. It is dated 26 March 1980 and chronicled "Treasury Chambers, Nigel Lawson" on the first page. Clearly, he has responsibility for it. Page 16 states:

"Control of the money supply will over a period of years reduce the rate of inflation."

Although I am proud to own this, I do not like trotting out the FSBR and I would not have dared to regurgitate it once again to the House, had the Chancellor not claimed:

"No Government has done more to set out its policy and stick to it."

I automatically had to look to see what he said.

The Chancellor went on to say:

"It is to provide a firm basis for those expectations that the Government has announced its firm commitment to a progressive reduction in money supply growth."

I understand that people can change their minds, but he cannot say that and at the same time say that the Government have done more than any other Government to set out their policy and stick to it. It is obvious that the Government have not done that. They set out their policy and immediately set about not sticking to it. Those are problems that the Chancellor must find some way of living with.

In the famous *Financial Times* interview of 3 January, the Chancellor said:

"As for the Budget, I have no regrets whatever."

The balance of payments forecast in the FSBR this year was £4 billion. Past forecasts allow for an error of 3 per cent. It is right to allow for some error. One cannot be too precise when talking about £4 billion. The Treasury is generous enough to allow itself to be out. Three per cent. of £4 billion amounts to £120 million, so the Chancellor assumed that there might be a balance of payments deficit not of £4 billion, but of £4,120 million. We now know that it was £14 billion. That is unbelievable. We must first ask ourselves what has happened to the Treasury. Can we believe that the Chancellor has no regrets about forecasting a £4 billion deficit? Can we believe that if, at the time of the Budget, he had anticipated not £4 billion but £14 billion, we would have had exactly the same Budget? Of course not.

Why, then, has the Chancellor been so humiliated by his forecast? We know that he has been hoist by his own petard and blown up by the device that he primed. He allowed our economic statistics to decline, he took a conscious decision to downgrade their importance, and he and the country have paid an exorbitant price for that folly. The Budget was completely misconceived because of that.

Although Chancellors invariably scoff at statistics—I have heard them all on this—they all make use of them. How else can they arrive at their Budget judgement? Is it by intuition, or by feel? I should be terrified if I thought that they relied exclusively on that. Of course they cannot.

Dr. Bray: The Chancellor was smirking when my right hon. Friend gave the errors, which are confusing in their presentation. To take the Chancellor's interpretation, the forecast balance of payments deficit in 1988 was £4 billion and the error was £3 billion which is a long way short of the actual error. The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) should not imagine that the Treasury forecast bears much relationship to the model. The model publication has been delayed. It was promised for yesterday, it had not been delivered when the Chancellor rose to speak and I do not know whether it has now been delivered.

Mr. Sheldon: I am sure that my hon. Friend will make his own comments, and his views on statistics are well known and important.

Statistics are not the only guide, but they are an important one, and the Chancellor should have learnt an essential lesson. How has he reacted to the £14 billion? Market forces would have led to the falling of the pound. He has reacted by an interventionist policy not to help but

to harm British industry. At the time of the Budget, the pound stood at DM3·07 and now it is at DM3·22, and the index of sterling against other currencies is higher now. So once again it is cheaper to import and harder to export. So much then for manufacturing industry. The Government have not considered the matter according to that sector of our economy, as they should.

As a result of that folly we have had a consumer boom. The euphoria of a rising standard of living has given way within months to the misery of a declining one. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has reduced taxes and put up interest rates all in the same year. He did not even have the excuse of the need to win a general election.

There is one lesson—not a very difficult one—that the right hon. Gentleman might have picked up from Lord Keynes on demand management. One does not reduce taxes on the rich in the middle of a spending boom. Those people who said that the tax cuts were smaller in economic terms overlooked the psychological effects of a Budget. There was a combination of tax cuts with high house prices, which led to a euphoria. It was a created euphoria activated by the Chancellor. In his Budget statement, he said:

"We have thus secured an enviable, virtuous circle in public finance: lower borrowing and lower tax rates create both the scope and the incentive for the private sector to expand."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 996.]

That is what it was intended for. Lower borrowing and lower taxes create both the scope and incentive for the private sector to expand. He encouraged the private sector and it went ahead and expanded; it spent and spent. That was the result of the Budget.

Our problems today concern essentially manufacturing industry. We do not trade very much internationally in services, but we trade enormously in manufactured products. If we were a country like Switzerland, we could manage with a large service sector, but we have 56 million people to look after and we cannot do that unless we sell a large part of our goods as well as our services. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his City background, has not paid sufficient attention to that.

Those 56 million people depend on the large hinterland of a flourishing, productive economy. The Chancellor has taken pride in the financial strength of Britain arising from the North sea oil economy, which has assisted in the move from a manufacturing economy to a rentier economy in which we live off the overseas investments. There is a need for training and education and a need to avoid the harmful effects of stop-go. The danger for much of our industry is that there has not been that much of a go. There has been a very large stop, and there is a very large stop now.

I make no apology when I speak on these matters for referring to my constituency, which lost 30 per cent. of its industry in those fateful years 1979-81. It was a prosperous town with many small and medium-sized firms, the largest of which employed 500 people. We lost one third of those companies in those two years. There was a wide range of medium-tech industries such as one finds in every country of the world, including Japan, the United States and Germany. Those industries were destroyed. When we come to advance, those companies will not be there so we will have some capacity constraints. Those companies were ruined by the combination of 17 per cent. interest rates and the $2·40 pound. The 17 per cent. interest rates finished them off at home and the $2·40 pound made exports almost impossible and resulted in imports.

Those are the lessons that we must learn. We must never find ourselves in that situation again, so we must re-create a larger manufacturing economy. No incentives are too great to restore that. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer ever has money to spread around, this is where is should go.

When a manufacturing company buys a machine tool, it does not just obtain a new piece of equipment: it gets productivity, a growth in skills to operate the new machinery and a modernisation of the factory and workplace, and it helps to produce the kind of Britain that we shall need if we are to regain our place as an important manufacturing country. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer ever has money to spend, there is no better way to spend it.

It is ludicrous that capital allowances are 25 per cent. Each year, therefore, the depreciation allowed is one quarter of the reducing capital value. That is clearly absurd. The profit of the distributor selling the machinery is greater than that 25 per cent. so, when he comes to sell that new grummet press, for example, even after a week, he will not get back the amount of the depreciation that he is allowed. We therefore have not an incentive, but a built-in disincentive, to capital modernisation. The best investment decisions are made on the basis of the need for machinery, but one must never discount the incentive of a product made easier to purchase through sensible tax policies, providing benefits which can be used to the advantage of the company, the employee, the industry and the nation.

We must ask how the Chancellor is dealing with the consumer boom. He declined any control on credit, on what I consider the hilarious foundation that it would not be fair to those with little financial knowledge because others would easily circumvent it and those with little financial knowledge would be left to carry the burden. That is to suggest that the Government are a paragon of fairness and equality. In the long run, I agree that there would be ways around them, but credit controls are not required for the long run. Action in areas such as hire purchase, banks and credit cards was required and could have been taken. Such a short-term measure would have had some immediate effect—largely psychological, but none the worse for that.

High interest rates hurt industry, which finds itself competing with the banks who can now offer a better return than many investments in manufacturing industry. If we know that it will cost us 15 or 16 per cent. or more, that is obviously a disincentive to spend money on investment in machinery, but that does not affect credit card purchasers who finance APRs approaching 30 per cent. and are oblivious to the 1 or 2 per cent. above that.

Interest rates are feeding into the retail prices index through mortgage payments. There is an inflationary chain. High interest rates lead to RPI rises, which lead to wage demands, which in turn lead to what the Chancellor always forswore—exhortation. That is what we have today. There was a time when the Government said that wage demands were nothing to do with them. They said that they would control the money supply and, if firms allowed excessive wage demands, they would go out of business. It is pitiable that we now see the Government, who are responsible for wage demands, pleading with industry not to grant them.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer must bear in mind the fact that, although mortgage interest is included in the

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RPI, house prices are not. The enormous rise in house prices is one element of inflation; there is no question about that. It affects everyone who buys a house with a mortgage. It affects everyone other than those who have paid cash outright or who have redeemed their mortgages. The Prime Minister knew the inflationary effects of her policies when she decided to buy her own house in Dulwich. She said that, if she had not bought it then, she would have had to move 100 miles out, because she could see that house prices were going to rise. That is an important element in inflation and it is not measured by the RPI, for reasons that we know and understand.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said in 1980 that we were in for

"three years of unparallelled austerity".

How right he was. I hope that we are not in for even a year of that. We paid the price then and the Government should have learned the lesson. If that lesson has to be learned again, the Government will rightly be accused of the damage that they have done to the country that we were sent here to serve.

5.47 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I found the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) illuminating, to say the least, because it confirmed what I and many of my hon. Friends thought: the Labour party is devoid of any policy at all. When asked twice by the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Labour party would increase spending if it were in office, he could not provide an answer. When asked twice by the Chancellor about the increase in the basic rate of taxation, he was unable or unwilling to answer. The only policy that he outlined was that there would be an increase in the higher rate of taxation. The Labour party is either devoid of policy or its policy is so out of this world that it is frightened that the ordinary man in the street will know what to expect if a Labour Government were elected.

I should like to spend a few minutes explaining to the House why, as a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, I could not vote for its report. I objected to it on a number of matters of principle, particularly paragraphs 18 to 21, in which the Committee said that, when considering public sector claims on public resources, transfer payments should be excluded. That is nonsense. What difference is there on the effect on the economy of an increase in the old age pension and an increase in nurses' pay?

If transfer payments were excluded, the percentage of expenditure to GDP would fall and there would be pressure for increased Government spending. In paragraph 30 the Select Committee recommends that there should be more information about differential price increases. Again, I think that that is unnecessary. It would undermine the cash planning process and would be a first move back to planning expenditure on a volume basis, a practice which was used under the previous Labour Government when spending was completely out of control.

My final objection to the report is the recommendation that the Government should publish annual national and public sector balance sheets. That would be very expensive and time-consuming for the Treasury and there would be enormous problems in valuation. For example, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury asked the Committee, how we would assess the present market value of a prison. Furthermore, there would be problems with depreciation.

This year's Autumn Statement paints a picture of a sound economy which has some short-term problems due to the unsustainable level of growth which has resulted in the resumption of inflationary pressure and a rise in the balance of payments deficit. I do not believe that the Chancellor's Budget judgment was in any way responsible for those short-term problems. With a public sector debt repayment now forecast at £9·8 billion, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said, we cannot describe the fiscal stance as slack. With that size of surplus, the tax cuts were completely justified.

It is always easy to be wise after the event, and the Chancellor has already admitted that he and other financial leaders in the industrial world over-estimated the dangers to the world economy following black Monday and the stock market crash. To prevent a worldwide collapse, they slackened the monetary stance and interest rates around the world fell. The world economy proved far more resilient than anyone imagined. In retrospect, interest rates were undoubtedly kept too low and growth went ahead at an unexpected level. That was particularly so in the United Kingdom where there was a large increase in private sector borrowing and private investment.

We are facing a much less serious problem than we would have faced if there had been a slump equivalent to that in the 1930s. Therefore, I stongly support the Government's commitment to reduce inflation. The present high levels of interest rates are necessary. However, I do not believe that they will be enough on their own. They must be backed, if possible, by wage increases in the private sector that do not put up unit labour costs more than the very minimum so that our exports remain competitive. If that is to be achieved, the Government must set an example in the public sector wage negotiations this year. A large proportion of wage increases in manufacturing industry is recouped by increases in productivity, but that is more difficult to achieve in the service sector and practically impossible in the public sector. Indeed, it rarely happens.

This year the Government should do everything possible to keep public sector pay increases within the level of inflation. There have been large increases in recent years for the police, firemen, teachers, nurses and the armed forces. This year the Government must be prepared to accept short-term unpopularity and stand firm.

Everyone accepts that the balance of payments deficit is too great and it cannot be ignored. However, there is a difference between our present deficit and other deficits since the war. In the past a balance of payments deficit has always been mirrored by a public sector deficit, and that is the position in America. At the moment we have a public sector surplus. Our trade deficit is completely a private sector phenomenon. It is the result of private sector investment—which will help us to increase productivity and produce exports in the future—private sector consumer borrowing and a rundown in private savings. There is a limit to the amount that the private sector is willing or able to borrow and we can spend our savings only once. Therefore, over a period, the deficit should rectify itself. However, it will persist for some time and the Government should take some action to try to increase the speed of its natural fall.

I urged the Chancellor to take measures in the Budget to encourage savings. The Government should look at all the nations with which we have a significant trade deficit to see whether we have the same access to their markets that they have to ours. That should include not only trade in goods, but trade in services. The most glaring example is Japan. It has taken 20 years to get the Japanese to open their markets to Scotch whisky. During that time their exports of manufacturing goods have increased dramatically. It is still not possible for us to have complete access to Japan for our insurance industry, and South Korea still prevents the free sale of Scotch whisky. We need a tough, no-nonsense trade policy based on reciprocity.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): In attempting to put those matters right the hon. Gentleman would not want to see a protectionist trade war which would inhibit Japanese external direct investment into regions like mine. Such investment has been significant in my area over the past five years. It must be extremely important to avoid a return to competitive protectionism. In that respect, his remarks are extremely unhelpful to the development of patterns in the world economy that assist in solving the problems to which he has drawn attention.

Mr. Townend: I am sure that my hon. Friends will be intrigued to know that there has been such an increase in investment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I am sure we are all delighted about that. Obviously the investment environment attracts foreign investors. However, I do not think that what I have suggested would prevent that investment. We believe in free trade and open markets, but open markets must operate two ways. I believe that the Japanese only appreciate strength in negotiations.

I congratulate the Government on their public expenditure forecasts in the Autumn Statement. It has been a long time since expenditure in a current year was expected to be more than £3 billion less than anticipated. That shows that we have Ministers in the Treasury who believe in good housekeeping.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: I thought that the hon. Gentleman said that he voted against the report. This is very important. Having looked at the report, I cannot see that he voted against it.

Mr. Townend: I want to make it clear that I was giving reasons why I could not vote for the report.

The planning total for next year will stay the same as planned and the Government deserve to be congratulated on that. However, in the two following years the Government intend to loosen their grip a little and increase spending by a further 3 per cent. each year.

Having abandoned their policy of keeping public expenditure level in real terms, the Government have set themselves a target of reducing public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product. Here again, they are to be congratulated on their success in bringing the figure down from 46·75 per cent. to 39·75 per cent. this year. However, it is worth putting that achievement into perpective. Under Harold Wilson's Government in 1964-65, public expenditure as a percentage of GDP was only 36 per cent. I often find it surprising to hear Opposition Members claim that we are spending far too little when we are still spending more than they did under Harold Wilson. I was a little disappointed, when I raised that matter with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the Select Committee, that he did not accept that 36 per cent. should be a target for the future.

I am worried that the impetus to increase spending might coincide with a period when economic growth is much slower as we try to level our balance of payments. Therefore, spending as a proportion of GDP will clearly rise.

I believe that the Government's policy is working. High interest rates are having an effect. The throttle is coming off the housing market, and once we get over the mad Christmas spend, consumer spending will drop. Provided that wage settlements do not explode, the economy should have a soft landing.

Government spending must be kept under control, but with a Budget surplus, I see no reason why, in his next Budget, the Chancellor should not continue repaying the national debt, while continuing his successful supply side policy of reducing taxation—proceeding to his ultimate aim of a standard tax rate of 20 per cent.

5.59 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): This afternoon, the Prime Minister spoke of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's absolute priority. I am sorry to see the Chancellor being called away at the very moment that I refer to his Prime Minister. I wonder about the reason. Perhaps she has summoned him. I hope that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will report my comments to him.

The right hon. Lady said that the Chancellor's absolute priority is to control inflation. As that is what she said, no doubt that is what his absolute priority will be. There was a stage when the Chancellor flirted with policies different from those of the Prime Minister, but that was not an entirely successful experiment. I do not know whether she is in the habit of reiterating strongly to him the way that she wants things done, but at the moment the right hon. Lady and the Chancellor are working to meet the same priority.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer reminds one of a doctor searching through a medicine cupboard, trying some medicines and throwing others away as being unusable. At the end of that long process, the Chancellor has lighted on one and says, "This medicine will work. If it doesn't work, you can take more of it. If it still doesn't work, you can take still more." The medicine is short-term interest rates.

It is odd that the Chancellor is still attending to the same disease of inflation. He has run out of all the excuses that he was previously able to give for inflation's continuance. He can no longer say that world commodity prices are causing inflation, as was the case some years ago. Neither can he blame over-mighty, over-powerful trade unions. He cannot blame an outgoing Labour Government for the rate of inflation. It is a little difficult to blame even the Conservative Government who preceded the last Labour Government, which the present Administration often do. Blaming the Heath Government is a little difficult for them to do at this distance.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Certainly he cannot blame the last Labour Government.

Mr. Beith: The Chancellor cannot blame the period when my hon. Friends ensured that a Labour Government reduced inflation from 21 per cent. to 7 per cent. Neither

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can he use the monetary supply targets, because he abandoned most of them. He cannot blame the public sector deficit, because the Government have achieved a public sector surplus.

In years gone by, I listened to many sermons from Conservative Members, including the Prime Minister, when they said that once we rid ourselves of the public sector deficit, there would be no inflation. The Conservatives have now done that—they have cracked it. They have achieved a public sector surplus, but still there is inflation.

The Government contributed to that inflation with the Chancellor's last Budget judgments. I dissent from the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) on this point. Where he is wrong about the Budget tax cuts is not in his analysis that, with hindsight, they may be seen as entirely acceptable in terms of the amount of revenue needed. One could even argue that they were insufficient in relation to revenue, because of the size of the surplus. But they had the effect of generating inflationary expectations at a particular time. In making that argument, I say also that that problem will not be solved by reimposing the tax levels that were earlier reduced. Those cuts had the one-off effect of giving people the knowledge that they would shortly have more money in their wage packets, encouraging them to have more credit at a time of considerable expansion in the credit market. That one-off effect undoubtedly led to overheating and contributed to inflation.

The Government also created unnecessary public sector price increases, which have added to inflation. The remedy that the Government choose, of higher short-term interest rates, increases inflation still further. No one can really accept the Chancellor's claim that one can consider inflation without reference to mortgage interest rates, because they are such a potent factor in inflation for home owners throughout the country.

Despite the Chancellor's prophesies and forecasts, the tables identified by the Select Committee show that the goal of zero inflation never gets nearer. It is always three years away that inflation is predicted to fall to 3 per cent. How many more years will it be before it falls to zero? The Chancellor has never cracked that one. He is not even believed by his fellow Ministers. In a statement the other day after a meeting of a Committee of the House, the Chancellor's right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy reiterated a forecast of £40 billion outturn of electricity industry investment. That figure assumes a rate of inflation of 8 per cent. That has been reiterated today on the Secretary of State's behalf. It is possible to reinterpret those figures to mean that inflation is only 5 per cent. However, it is impossible to get it down to 3 per cent., let alone zero. Ministers are acting on assumptions about what will happen to inflation that are wholly different from the rosy ones made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Let us consider the short-term interest rates, and examine whether their use will achieve the Chancellor's objective. From whatever standpoint one considers it, the Select Committee's report poses questions about the assumptions on which the Chancellor bases his strategy. One is whether credit is all that sensitive to interest rates. The burden of the letter that is alleged to have been sent by the Governor of the Bank of England to the Chancellor is that it is not, and that if the Chancellor engages in policies of the kind he adopted for his last Budget and creates further inflationary expectations, interest rates will not by themselves stop that process.

As well as being an instrument of limited effectiveness, higher interest rates are counter-productive. They have an adverse effect on domestic inflation because of their influence on mortgage repayments, and also a serious effect on industrial competitiveness and the balance of payments, by pricing British goods upwards in foreign markets.

One is bound to question what will happen eventually if the market gets round to dealing with the curious fact that mortgage interest operates on a short-term basis, whereas borrowing money to buy a house is in reality a long-term commitment. How long will that situation continue? How long will the competitive mortgage market continue offering only short-term interest rates in house purchase finance? There is no obvious reason why it should do so, other than the traditional pattern of building society borrowing and lending policies.

From the home owners' point of view, I hope that the market will address that question and look for ways of relating home ownership to a long-term interest rate, which could be much lower—in the region of 9 per cent. Home owners would be much better off, but the Chancellor would be left naked and with no clothes at all. Short-term interest rates would cease to be available to him as his one instrument for managing the economy.

In addressing the effects of that instrument on the balance of payments, I am led to comment on our balance of payments deficit itself. The forecast trade deficit of £4 billion turned out to be in the region of £14 billion, and we must question the Government's assumptions about what will happen next. They claim that the trade deficit will be tackled by depressing domestic demand through high interest rates, so that industry will have spare capacity, and that that spare capacity will immediately be diverted to exporting more goods. The Government argue that the resulting increased price in foreign markets will be entirely offset by released capacity.

I can tell the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that I do not know many people who believe that things will happen in that way. That is not a political criticism of the Government but an attempt at making an objective assessment of the viability of such a strategy. It cannot be guaranteed that excess capacity can easily be switched to export production, or that the size of the trading sector switched will be big enough to make a significant difference to our trade deficit.

If the Government's assumptions do not hold, the United Kingdom trade deficit will remain dangerously high, and overseas confidence will be tested. At present, it is attractive to put money into this country in sterling on the basis of current high interest rates, but if confidence is lost, the crisis will come. The Chancellor blames the statistics for a lot of this and says that they are all wrong. The Select Committee, too, was fairly critical on that point, but everyone in these arguments seems to be guilty of misusing statistics. The Chancellor increasingly talks as if the retail prices index already excluded mortgage interest rates. He is in danger of getting into the position that we got into on employment statistics, where nobody any longer believes the Government's unemployment figures because they have been changed so many times.

It is in the general interest that we should have generally accepted statistics so that we can talk meaningfully about unemployment, inflation and public expenditure levels. When the Government increase health expenditure by 1·7 per cent. they should stop going around saying that they have increased it by 4·5 per cent., or at least they should explain rather more clearly that a lot of that increase is accounted for by projected savings in efficiency and by changes in the balance sheet of public assets by the sale of the health authority's present assets, to which the Select Committee attached some importance.

I am bound to ask the Chief Secretary again why he believes that public expenditure should decline as a proportion of gross domestic product. What is the ultimate objective of public expenditure declining year by year? That is the yardstick to which he has been instructed to work. I tried to find out during the sittings of the Select Committee what was the ultimate objective. Was it zero or was it some accepted plateau? He said that he did not think that there was a plateau. Where are we heading? Surely the argument about public expenditure is an argument about its merits, associated with an argument about what level might be unreasonable for the taxpayer or the economy to bear.

We now have a substantial public sector surplus and a situation in which industry can see where the serious gaps in public expenditure are causing difficulties. It does not seem reasonable to argue that we should go on reducing public expenditure year by year. The Prime Minister's argument used to be that public expenditure was crowding out everything else and causing inflation, thus having a harmful effect on the economy. Many businesses would now like to see some public expenditure crowding in. Certainly many businesses in London would like to see greater public investment in London's public transport system so that their staff can travel to work. In other parts of the country, industry would like to see some public expenditure on the infrastructure on which it depends—for example, links from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and Scotland. Businesses, usually pretty sceptical about unnecessary public expenditure, are increasingly worried that if some expenditure does not take place they will not be able to compete.

There is a growing sense that in some areas of public expenditure we are getting into public squalor. It is difficult to relate that to a target of constantly decreasing public spending as a proportion of what we as a nation can produce. Therefore, I invite the Chief Secretary to tell us when he replies what is the purpose of it all.

As to the strategy that the Chancellor should adopt, we would argue that there are a number of things that he could do in the Budget which would reduce his dependence on interest rates as the sole measure and deal with some of the other matters that I have described. He should do more about savings, as I have argued in all our previous economic debates and, indeed, on the occasions when he has introduced measures that were supposed to encourage savings, but the Chancellor has had such a narrow conception.

Take the greatly trumpeted personal equity plans which were introduced two Budgets ago which were never cast in such a way that they would encourage a wider range of people to invest in industry. All the tax reliefs that they offered benefited mainly those with an existing portfolio who had not used up their other tax reliefs. Unless he gives some front-ended tax relief on the PEP schemes and extends their scope in some way, he will not attract a wider range of people into saving, and particularly into saving in industry. Unless he does give some reason for savings in industry, he will not get the level playing field either.

Mr. Budgen: Is there any sign that if there were a distortion in the tax system in favour of some form of saving, say in a particular kind of share of or something like that, it would increase overall saving, or would it merely make those favoured forms of saving more attractive and bump up their market value?

Mr. Beith: There are two options open to the Government at the moment. One is to remove all tax incentives which distort the savings market. I know that that is what the hon. Gentleman would favour. That would lead him to do what I know the Prime Minister does not want to do, which is to remove mortgage interest tax relief, which attracts savings into housing. The other is to try to balance the picture by ensuring that savings in industry, and certainly those on a fairly limited scale affecting a wider range of people, can be at least as attractive as investing in the bricks and mortar of a home. Some offsetting of existing distortions for which there are other justifications seems reasonable in those circumstances unless the Government are to change tack entirely and go for the complete removal of all tax incentives that affect saving.

The other part of the hon. Gentleman's question is perfectly fair. Will it increase overall savings? More sensibly directed incentives to savings could increase overall saving by attracting people who are not now saving. Clearly there is bound to be some shifting, but there could be a wider effect. But to do that, it would also be necessary to change the Government's approach to things such as targeted benefits. If the Chancellor goes on saying, and Ministers go on ensuring, that to have a small amount of personal savings precludes one from any form of benefit after retirement, a culture against saving is built up. That is one of the current disincentives to saving about which the Government should be more worried.

I must not deal so deeply with each individual item that I keep other hon. Members out of the debate. The Chancellor should also take some informal steps to cool the credit explosion. Formal credit controls are not an attractive way to go. They would be extremely unfair and it would be a pity to have to achieve a reduction of the overall level of credit by penalising those most dependent on credit and least able to look for alternatives. That is why I said previously that the Bank of England and the Chancellor should start to call in and talk to the credit institutions and ask them what they are going to do. They should ask them to cool off the vast pressure of ludicrous letters that go out through computer mailings trying to induce people to engage in credit that they cannot afford. The possibility that the alternative would be fairly uncomfortable credit controls might concentrate the minds of those involved.

The Chancellor should drop the public sector price increases, such as those for electricity—they are demonstrably not required for the electricity industry's investment programme which has been so hugely overstated. He should make prudent use of the fiscal surplus for investment in those areas in which he could increase industry's competitiveness. He should take early steps to get into the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS

[Mr. Beith]

to give us some stability and that downward pressure on inflation which is the Prime Minister's reason for not joining the EMS. She does not want to be tied into German policies which bear down heavily on inflation. Why she does not is rather difficult to understand, but that would be the logical step to take.

Then we come to what should be done about personal taxation. The Chancellor is presented with an opportunity in his next Budget to sort out some of the mess of national insurance contributions and taxation for the low paid. He would earn some respect if he made some serious tax reforms in that area, given the freedom that the surplus gives him which previous Chancellors, and indeed the Government in previous Budgets, may not have felt they had. There would be scope for changes in that area which would not represent a massive tax cut programme of the kind that would have damaging economic consequences. It is that combination of greater prudence and a greater sense of social justice which many British people, including many who supported the Conservative party at the previous election, feel is desperately needed.

I have tried to set out positive ways in which there could be an alternative to a strategy which is based on some dangerous assumptions, and I commend them to the House.

6.18 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The debate opened with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor agreeing that the published statistics were deficient. As the debate went on it was clear that the statistics of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr Brown) were also deficient.

The hon. Gentleman said that he would outline the Labour party's policies for dealing with inflation and other important matters. I know that they were not spelt out overtly, but both he and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) alluded to them, I think unconsciously. The hon. Gentleman said that it was important to act directly on prices. I think that I know exactly what the Opposition would do if they were re-elected. They would try to reactivate Mr. Solomon Binding. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that it was not necessary to go in for a full-scale prices and incomes policy; all that was necessary was for the Governor of the Bank of England to call in the leaders of the credit institutions and have a word with them. So Liberals would not go in for such a full-blooded affair as that to which the Opposition are still wedded in terms of a prices and incomes policy.

Two principal concerns emerge from the Autumn Statement—at least, they concern Conservative Members. The first is inflation, the second the balance of payments. Of those, the first is by far the more important. The solution to the first is the key to solving the second. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is right and that the rate of inflation will peak in the next few months before falling to lower levels. One thing is certain: high interest rates are an essential weapon in combating inflation. In contrast with what other hon. Members think, I do not think that there is an alternative in the form of rationing credit, not because I believe that the techniques of doing that would be inadequate or even that it might be unfair as between one person who received credit and another.

I say that it would be impractical because London is now a world financial centre whose existence depends upon the free transfer and flow of funds between one part of the world and another. It would not be possible to mount any effective system of controlling credit in one country, such as the United Kingdom, without giving up the advantage that we have as a financial centre. It does not make sense to throw out the whole trading system in order to impose controls which, in any case, would not work.

It is right to distinguish between this and previous inflationary bouts, which those who have been in this place for some time will well recognise. First, I refer to the enormous surplus in the public sector. No one can get away from that—it is a signal achievement, for which my right hon. Friend is responsible. It is not just the sale of assets in the public sector which has achieved this effect; it would have happened in any event. There would have been a surplus of £4 billion without the sale of public sector assets.

Nor have corporations and businesses in any way failed. They have a large savings ratio; they are investing at record levels; and, as my right hon. Friend said earlier, their earnings on capital are at the highest level for about 20 years. The whole problem appears to reside in the private sector, and it is on that that we must concentrate our attention. This is what distinguishes our position from that of the United States, where there is a large public sector deficit. The trick is to encourage savings in the private sector. High interest rates will certainly have that effect if they are high enough, but this is an opportunity to broaden the entire level of savings.

I do not accept, as the Opposition do, that it was wrong to reduce taxation in the last Budget—how much further does one have to reduce the national debt? It is extraordinary that the gross debt interest is forecast to fall from £17·75 billion this year to £15·5 billion in 1991-2. It is clear that those who want to keep tax rates high want to do so not for economic reasons but for some sort of moral reasons. The people, apparently, may not be trusted to act responsibly with their own money so it must be removed from them. That is entirely in line with Socialist policy: people are not allowed to be entrusted with their money —a form of the nanny state. I hope that my hon. Friends will agree that it should be no part of Conservative policy to take more revenue than is strictly necessary to pay the state's expenditure.

There is another argument against higher tax rates. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne slid pretty quickly over the fact that he was responsible for high rates. When he was Financial Secretary in the last Labour Government tax rates were 92 per cent. So we should not take any lectures from him about taxation levels——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): How would the hon. Gentleman respond to the answer given to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) this week, which showed that taxation, including direct and indirect taxation, is now higher under this Government than it was in 1979?

Sir Peter Hordern: I should be delighted to explain. The Opposition cannot grasp that earnings in this country have appreciated considerably, so people are vastly better off.

Of course they have gone through higher rates of taxation, but they are conspicuously better off than they were a few years ago; statistics prove that.

I wonder whether it is right to concentrate on savings by lending money to the Government to reduce the national debt, or to concentrate on house purchase, on which the tax concessions operate now. There has been a revolution—the formation of a property-owning democrary—but that is confined to the home-owning democracy. In virtually every area, the Government have taken power from the state, from local authorities and from institutional landlords and handed it over to the people. But one great institution remains—the investing institutions, which are mainly pension funds. Their beneficiaries are seldom, if ever, consulted.

One reason why the savings ratio has fallen so low is that companies have waived their contribution in recent times because of the pension funds' good performance. Employees are far too dependent on their employers for their retirement benefits. We should now consider spreading the property-owning democracy still further.

Mr. Budgen: Is that really true? Surely the problem about the dramatic fall in the savings ratio is the vast increase in borrowing, not any great reduction in saving. The savings ratio appears to be a figure based only on savings, but is it not a net figure?

Sir Peter Hordern: I picked this out of the Autumn Statement—I do not have the reference now—but one of the reasons for the fall in savings is the fact that institutional investment has fallen, from employers' contributions——

Mr. Cousins *rose*——

Sir Peter Hordern: I should like to give way, but many other hon. Members want to speak.

I propose that we spread the property-owning democracy much further and allow mortgage tax relief to apply to all who save additional sums up to the same level of £30,000. I mean this as an alternative for those who do not have mortgages on their homes. There are many examples of people being unable to buy homes because they are too expensive, or because of circumstances peculiar to them, but the encouragement of savings is necessary at present, and would be good in any event. It would also be helpful to have savings concessions in the same way for elderly people who have paid off their mortgages. In many respects—home ownership, education, trade union rights—we have broken institutional power and returned it to the people. Pensions, too, are an important institution, and they are far too dependent on short-term performance. Our democracy would be much healthier if ownership were spread to the roots and we could get away from the dependency culture that institutional pensions breed.

There would have to be additional investment. It would not be possible to allow people to switch from existing investments to the tax relief scheme, and investments would have to be held in private individuals' names. These investments would not be managed for them but would be held in shares and units in equities which could be bought or sold. That would be particularly apt now. It would help to enfranchise the investment market.

Bank borrowing by the private sector amounted to £49·8 billion in the first three quarters of 1988—more than the whole of bank borrowing in 1987 and virtually double that in 1985. We must try to achieve a more permanent and lasting shift into savings than is possible through the building societies or even by lending money to the Government.

I wish that I felt that all that is necessary in the control of inflation is high interest rates. I felt in 1988—and I still feel strongly—that to control inflation our currency should be closely linked with the European currencies, particularly the deutschemark. The comparison is not exact, but one has only to look at the effect of coupling the Hong Kong dollar with the United states dollar. If that had not taken place, the Hong Kong dollar would have fallen through the floor. The rate of interest in Hong Kong is lower now than it is in the United States. That direct link has done a great deal to stabilise the position in Hong Kong.

I do not suggest that we are in a similar position, but to link our currency directly with a strong currency, such as the deutschmark—since Germany's inflation rate is 2 to 3 per cent. and interest rates are 5 per cent.—would be of immense benefit to this country. I do not refer to any political advantage that might be obtained by those means. I believe that it is a practical weapon that could be used to combat inflation. The use of that weapon has already been far too long delayed. We need an external discipline as well as the interest rate weapon to deal with inflation.

The argument has been conducted so far in altogether too academic terms. The instrument for keeping sterling tied to the deutschmark would still be interest rates. Industry and business would know that the direct result of allowing wages to increase to an uncompetitive level would be higher interest rates. They would know that for certain; they would not have to guess what the Chancellor intended to do.

Practical experience, as opposed to theory, suggests that existing investments overseas have to be hedged now. People's perception of the strength or weakness of a currency is usually the same. There is far more activity now in the foreign exchange markets than there would be if there were a formal link between sterling and the deutschmark and the European Community as a whole. When people—usually academics—complain that that would place an impossible strain on foreign exchange and that the Bank of England could not intervene with sufficient reserves, the truth is that if there were a formal link between sterling and the deutschmark there would be nothing like the amount of business being done as is being done now.

As for setting up a central bank within the European Community, I think that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was absolutely right to deplore the Socialist idea that a central bank must be established. However, if we were part of the European monetary system, that would be the effect. I do not believe that there needs to be a formal institution, set up by the Commission or the Council of Ministers. However, the practical effect of the United Kingdom joining the EMS would be that funds would be drawn to the strongest currency. It would not be long before, for the sake of practical convenience, European Community bankers combined to form a suitable means of conducting monetary and economic policy, which would turn out to be very much like a central bank. Progress towards monetary union will be made within the EEC. It is very much better that we should be part of that process than outside it.

[Sir Peter Hordern]

What on earth are we afraid of? The objections to the United Kingdom joining the EMS have been concocted by lawyers. They say, "Oh, you can't have that. Look at the small print. Look at the danger of having a central bank." With respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), it is a lawyer's trick. Where would the Victorians have been if they had tried to start their industrial revolution with lawyers? It would never have got off the ground. We must have far more confidence in ourselves than now seems to be the case. We should join the European monetary system, and the sooner the better.

6.34 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on his excellent speech, the third in a row. However, before he leaves the Chamber, I am afraid that I cannot similarly congratulate the Chancellor. His speech was a characteristic mixture of insouciance and complacency. He gave absolutely no sign that he is aware of any of the economic problems, or of the fact that the economy is seriously out of balance.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) on his skilful chairmanship of the Select Committee. We are a diverse bunch of people. He keeps us together very well, in the circumstances. I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on assisting us to produce a valuable report for the House.

The Select Committee report reveals that the economy is now seriously out of balance in three interconnected ways. First, demand is still rising too fast; secondly, inflation is too high; thirdly, the current account is now in very substantial deficit.

On demand, it is ironic that, after a number of years in which our growth rate was behind that of our main competitors, the Select Committee should now be warning of too fast a growth rate and advocating action to restore balance. We all applaud economic growth: it makes possible increasing living standards, it brings down unemployment and, provided that the Government make available the necessary investment, it can lead to improvements in vital services. That is why I welcomed, when I spoke in the debate on 25 October, the fact that, since the deep and disastrous recession of 1980-81, the British economy has grown steadily throughout the 1980s.

I drew attention also to the welcome increase in labour productivity that has raised the productive potential of the British economy and therefore enabled the British economy to grow more quickly. Whereas it used to be said that we could grow at only two thirds the rate of our main competitors, it is safe to say now that we can probably grow at about the same rate, without running into balance of payments difficulties.

What, therefore, has gone wrong? The problem with the British economy is that the Chancellor failed to take control of the situation last spring, despite obvious signs —I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Worthing on this point—that the economy was growing too fast and in an unbalanced fashion. By March last year—I invite the right hon. Gentleman to look at press comment at the time, at the statistics and at what Opposition spokesmen said—our growth was not only faster than that of our main competitors but faster than our productive potential.

It is true that, after the consumption-led boom—the Government have been making great play of it—that began in 1986, investment has risen rapidly, but the Government never say that investment fell by 5 per cent. in 1980 or by 10 per cent. in 1981. So there is a considerable amount of catching up to do. Despite the recent large increases in investment, we are still investing only 18 per cent. of our gross national product, compared with Japan's 30 per cent. We have a long way to go.

The other difficulty is the regional imbalance in the British economy. When the southern economy is in danger of overheating, as it is now, the northern economy is only just warming up. It was when the economy was becoming over-stretched that the Chancellor introduced his tax-cutting Budget last March. I know that the Treasury has argued that the Budget had little effect on demand, but there is no doubt—I very much agree with what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said on this point—about the psychological impact of the Chancellor's last Budget. It gave all the wrong signals. Add tax cuts to the record fall in the savings ratio, the massive credit expansion—triggered off by deregulation—the consumption boom and, last but not least, earnings rising faster than inflation, and we have all the makings of a dangerously overheated economy.

The Chancellor cannot say that he was not warned. Not only the Opposition alerted him to the dangers. A number of prominent economists, many City commentators and even the Bank of England were concerned but the Chancellor allowed his political obsession with tax cuts —almost his personal political manifesto—to overrule what should have been his priority as Chancellor—economic prudence. As the Select Committee report points out, the consequences of the Chancellor's gamble are now only too apparent. There is the rising inflation forecast by the Autumn Statement. Already, the OECD main economic indicators for December show that our inflation rate is the highest of the G7 countries.

When the Chancellor gave evidence to the Select Committee, he was pressed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) to say whether the inflation rate would rise above 7 per cent. His answer was that we could make our own assessment. That was telling the Select Committee that he is expecting inflation to rise above 7 per cent. during 1989. That is a disturbing prospect, and there will certainly be great difficulties in getting it down.

Despite the Chancellor's remark to the Select Committee—

"the central purpose of the macro-economic policy is to get inflation under control"—

the Select Committee remains sceptical about the Government's recent record on inflation. As we point out in our report, the Government's

"goal of 3 per cent. inflation always remains three years from being realised."

So we have a serious inflationary problem.

The other problem highlighted by the Committee is the extremely large and rapidly deteriorating current account deficit. At the time of the last Budget, as hon. Members have pointed out, the Treasury was forecasting a £4 billion deficit for this year. The Autumn Statement's revised forecast is £13 billion, a figure which had already been

achieved by November. The forecast for next year is an £11 billion deficit. In other words, our current account deficit has reached and is expected to remain at between 2 and 3 per cent. of GDP—a proportion similar to that of the United States, which has been criticised by the Chancellor.

It is worth noting the Select Committee's comment:

"As a proportion of GDP the 1988 deficit is not unprecedented, but a sequence of two annual deficits well in excess of 2 per cent. of GDP has not occurred since shortly after the war. We are not aware of any occasion since then in which the economy of any major trading nation has run a long series of deficits of this size without eventually encountering currency difficulties."

The Chancellor should be aware of our remarks.

As I have already argued, it is largely the Chancellor's fault that we are now in such a mess. We warned him about the dangers, and he failed to listen. Even so, it is the job of the Opposition to offer him constructive advice and I shall try to do just that. He could make a start by having the honesty to admit that the economy is seriously out of balance.

The Chancellor certainly has reaffirmed that the defeat of inflation is the Government's central objective, but, in his evidence to the Select Committee, the Chancellor was far more concerned to boost his own record on inflation and say how well he has done, and apparently to argue for changes in the way in which the RPI is calculated by removing mortgage interest rates from the index.

However, on other occasions the Government are only too concerned to say how well they have done and to stress the fact that more than 60 per cent. of people in this country are house owners. That has a major impact on inflation. The Chancellor should remember that there are probably more home owners in Britain than in any other western European country, so it would be very badly received if the Government tried to remove mortgage interest rates from the RPI. The Chancellor was certainly far more concerned to argue the case for that than to explain how inflation might be brought down.

The Chancellor is even more complacent about the current account deficit. He implies that somehow it is not a serious problem. If I understand it, his argument runs as follows: that in a world of international capital markets, without fixed exchange rates, some countries will have surpluses and others will have deficits, and we happen to be one of the countries that has a deficit. According to the Chancellor, that means that we are doing our bit for world trade and growth by running a deficit. The Chancellor considers that that is good for Britain too. On 29 November he told the House:

"It is more like a company that, though profitable, cannot finance its investment programme entirely from its own resources, and has to raise funds from the market to fill the gap."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 596.]

According to the Chancellor, it is therefore right and proper for Britain to continue to rely on the rest of the world to finance our current account deficit.

I wish it were possible to take as relaxed a view as the Chancellor. Unfortunately, despite the welcome increase in investment over the past year, it is not just a question of graciously allowing the rest of the world the opportunity to invest in our industries. The DTI figures on imports by commodity show a major increase in consumption goods as well as foreign manufactured goods. The latest OECD report on the British economy pointed out that imports of manufactured goods have increased far faster than exports throughout the 1980s and that import penetration into the British economy remains high. Therefore, it is clear that our deficit reflects much more excess demand and underlying structural weaknesses than the welcome benign effect of a foreign investment programme in British industry.

As the Select Committee report and the OECD economic outlook point out, substantial risks are attached to running a deficit for any length of time. International capital flows are only too volatile, and if confidence goes there is likely to be sharp downward pressure on the exchange rate, which the British authorities would not be able to control. The overseas assets about which the Chancellor has so often boasted and which represent one of the few tangible benefits of North sea oil will be used up if we continue to run a balance of payments deficit of such a scale. Corrective action has to be taken sooner rather than later, not only on the balance of payments but on demand and inflation.

The problem is that the Chancellor is operating with too few instruments. We are not arguing that a Labour Chancellor would not use interest rates—of course he would. We are saying that an excessive reliance on interest rates carries considerable risks. The Chancellor admitted to the Select Committee that high interest rates could hurt small businesses. Equally important, by contributing to an over-strong pound, they can also harm the prospects of exporters. Last but not least, they hurt home owners. Reliance on interest rates alone runs the danger of bringing the economy to a grinding halt if applied too bluntly, or, if applied too laxly, of leading to a catastrophic loss of confidence in sterling. So more instruments are needed.

On the monetary side, the Government should consider the possibility of at least temporary consumer credit controls. I accept that things have changed, but there is a case for obliging lending institutions to make special deposits and for imposing some limitation on bank loans to the personal sector. At least that would be a clear signal to consumers. I agree with the encouragement of savings. As we say in our report, the Government should be looking more seriously at that issue.

Sir Peter Hordern: Does the hon. Gentleman recall the time when there was a restriction on private credit that was not extended to companies? What used to happen was that company treasurers would borrow money at the corporation rate and lend it on the money market to private consumers at a rate which produced a considerable return. It is not possible to distinguish between private restriction and company restraint.

Mr. Radice: I accept that things have changed, but it would not be impossible to operate short-term credit controls. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said, they are needed for short-term arrangements. We are not considering long-term arrangements. They at least give a slightly broader balance of instruments with which to operate.

The Chancellor has forsworn the use of fiscal policy, except in the medium term. He is wrong. He should say now—before the Budget—that, because of demand, he will not cut tax rates this year. I do not think that he will agree, but there is a strong case for restoring the 60 per cent. top rate band. It would at least help to finance the raising of tax thresholds, which all of us would probably

[Mr. Radice]

agree are necessary. Measures along those lines would also give a signal to the market that the Government are serious about controlling demand.

Another problem with the Chancellor's policy, with its over-reliance on interest rates, is that the exchange rate cannot be used to redress the current account deficit, unless there is a collapse in confidence, leading to a collapse in sterling. The problem is that, with the Chancellor's high interest rate policy, the pound is now as uncompetitive as it was in the great 1980-81 recession. In 1989, with no rising oil prices and no oil exports at the same level to bail out the balance of payments, the only way for the Chancellor to improve the balance of payments is to operate on imports—that is, if he uses only interest rates—by slamming on the brakes through higher and higher interest rates. A less inflexible exchange rate policy would at least have the advantage of making exports more competitive and thus improving the balance of payments.

The truth is that, if the Government are to take action on excessive demand, bring down inflation, and bring the current account into balance again, they cannot operate on the basis of a single instrument. They must use all available weapons—monetary, fiscal and exchange rate—if they are to bring the economy into balance. I fear that there is no sign that the Government are aware of that point. On the contrary, what was so depressing about the Chancellor's speech was the lack of concern that he showed for the problem of inflation and for the current account deficit, and his repeated insistence on relying entirely on interest rates. It does not bode well for the Government's chances of bringing the economy into balance again.

6.52 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) will not be surprised to know that I do not wish to follow his criticism of the Chancellor's overall economic strategy.

There is one narrow but important aspect of the Autumn Statement—overseas aid—about which I have two points to register with my right hon. Friend and his team. The first concerns the Chancellor's extremely welcome and imaginative debt reduction initiative for the poorest sub-Saharan African countries. I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on conceiving the scheme and on successively negotiating its acceptance by members of the Paris Club. It was no mean achievement. The whole House has reason to be grateful to him for that.

It comes as a surprise to see the Treasury's projections of the public expenditure over the next three years that is due to arise from the Chancellor's debt reduction initiative which is now in place. Given the level of indebtedness of the countries concerned and, therefore, the attractiveness of the scheme to them, one would have expected a fairly quick and significant build-up of public expenditure.

On looking at the figures, it appears that there will be no public expenditure under the scheme during the 1989-90 financial year. In the 1990-91 financial year, there will be a bare £2·5 million. In 1990-91, United Kingdom expenditure under the scheme will amount to only £14 million. Of course, that money is to be spread among all countries in sub-Saharan Africa. That is a disappointingly slow rate of build-up. I should have expected something much more significant.

It is a matter of concern that, on our own estimates, in three years from now, the countries concerned will benefit to the tune of only about £14 million. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will at least give a brief explanation of why the expenditure provision is so small and why the build-up rate is so delayed. I hope also that he will give the House an assurance that, through the IMF and the Paris Club, the British Government will do everything that they can to try to maximise ways in which cripplingly indebted countries are able to benefit from the Chancellor's debt reduction initiative.

I now deal with a second, more fundamental issue—the overall provision of overseas aid. Although the Government's general performance is extremely creditable in the main range of social issues, not least in respect of the National Health Service, despite the Opposition's carpings, that is not entirely true of their provision of overseas aid. I intend and imply no criticism whatever of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development—quite the reverse. In the 15 years I have been in the House, we have had no more effective and capable Minister for Overseas Development than my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten). He is doing an outstanding job, but even he can only make such bricks as he can with the straw that is available. Set against the totality of the Government's public expenditure programme, the amount of straw that he has been given is relatively small.

I cite two instances. First, table 1.10 of the Autumn Statement shows that, in real terms, overseas aid is still well below what it was when we came to office in 1979, and also that, three years from now, that will still be the case. That is not a happy situation.

Second, I am unhappy that the proportion of our gross national product that we devote to the overseas aid programme should have pursued a steady downward course while the Government have been in office. In 1979, the proportion was 0·51 per cent. It has steadily fallen. In 1987, the latest year for which we have figures, it had fallen to 0·28 per cent. According to Overseas Development Administration figures, that 0·28 per cent. is below the proportion spent by every other major western European country and also most smaller western European countries.

It is no answer to say that GNP has been expanding. Of course we all greatly welcome and applaud that, but, if GNP has been expanding, and therefore, our wealth has been increasing, one would have hoped to achieve, at least as an minimum, a constant proportion going towards least-developed countries and to those in the greatest need in sheer human terms. It is regrettable that we have not been able to maintain a more constant level of the proportion of GNP that we devote to overseas aid.

When my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary winds up, he will no doubt be equipped with a suitable defensive Treasury brief headed "Overseas Aid". That will draw attention to the fact that the published figures in the Autumn Statement show that it is planned that there should be an increase of 5 per cent. in real terms in the overseas aid programme over the next three years. I welcome that. However, let us have no illusions. Even an increase of that sort will not bring the overseas aid programme anywhere near what it was when the

Conservative party took office in 1979. Nor is it likely to bring the percentage of GNP used on that programme up to the level of the larger European countries—or even many of the smaller ones.

I hope that Treasury Ministers will continue to reflect on this matter, because all hon. Members are familiar with the needs that are made clear in stark human terms in the press and on television. We live in a world in which many people still suffer from starvation and semi-starvation, where many diseases are eminently curable with modest applications of basic health care and with relatively small sums being spent on producing small increases in the quality of diet and making cleaner water more widely available. At those basic levels, the need to spend more on overseas aid is paramount and compelling.

This country has the means to utilise more expenditure on overseas aid. No other country has voluntary and charitable organisations with more professionalism, expertise and commitment than our own. Charitable organisations and their staff who work in Third-world countries are an enormous credit to this country. I am not entirely sure why, but people in this country to a greater extent than in many other countries seem to be prepared to make a commitment to serve, in some cases for many years, in some of the most remote, harsh and disease-ridden parts of the world. Again and again, individuals from this country give unsung, and often unheard-of, marvellous commitment to some of the most desperate communities in Third world countries. Therefore, we have the means, and the need is clear.

I hope that before we debate next year's Autumn Statement—we do so each year in the comparatively extraordinary affluence, comfort and ease, of western Europe—Treasury Ministers will give further consideration to what constitutes a proper level of commitment to those parts of the world that are so singularly less fortunate than our own.

7.4 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) and the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) brought a necessary note of humility into our proceedings. They both drew attention to the position of the world economy in conjunction with our own. That must give Conservative Members grounds for concern. Even if we were to accept that the Government are experiencing a period of short-term transitional difficulty, we should also have to bear in mind that the world economy is undergoing a period of great transitional difficulty.

The problem of world debt has been alluded to. There is the problem of grappling with the American deficit together with the problem of not returning to an era of protectionism, into which a Conservative Member slipped so easily during the debate. Dealing with the short-term difficulties in the world economy together with the difficulties in our own economy will make the task of Government extremely difficult.

I add to the note of humility one of charity. It has often been said—I have said it myself—that the Chancellor has only one policy instrument, short-term interest rates. That is not fair to him. He also has a prices and incomes policy disguised as an exchange rate policy. Now the exchange rate is for internal consumption rather than external consumption. We must proceed with the exchange rate policy on its present terms until the prices and incomes in our economy are beaten down. If the consequence of that is a sustained balance of payments deficit over many months or years, we must put up with it and trust that the world economy, despite its own difficulties, will see us through. I doubt whether any hon. Member believes that that is a tenable or serious policy.

In conjunction with that, we have the Chancellor's interest rate policy and its effects on our economy. This is a curious time in which the party runs together with the headache. We are running two policies side by side—the Chancellor's boom and the Chancellor's slump. We shall experience a long war of attrition until we find out which will come out on top. That is a matter of guesswork, perhaps even for the Government.

There is doubt about whether the Government's policy is truly counter-inflationary. A policy of raising short-term interest rates, which imposes on the 8·5 million owner-occupying, mortgage-paying households a dramatic cut in their standard of living, is not counter-inflationary. Those people need no lectures from the Government about a dependency culture because they are not part of it. They belong to households in which the partners are young and often both economically active. They will attempt, by individual and collective action, to combat the effects of the Chancellor's policy. That will be shown in wage disputes and earnings drift as people seek to push their earnings ahead even if their wage rates are stationary or held down. That will have all sorts of effects in an economy in which the stock of skills is dwindling and the labour market is tightening because of demographic trends.

The Government have chosen owner-occupiers to bear the brunt of their policies. As I have said, they are young, economically active and command a great share of the dwindling stock of skills. They are in age groups where demographic trends support their attempts to combat Government policies. You will discover that relying on short-term interest rates alone is not counter-inflationary, but inflationary. You will be forced back to the side of the Chancellor's policies which ignores the balance of payments consequences as you use the exchange rate as a substitute for a prices and incomes policy. It is a period of much difficulty for the Government, and they should not ignore what they are doing.

The Chancellor deregulated the financial markets, but according to his policy that deregulation was to be accompanied by fiscal neutrality through the tax system so that the savings and investment market would not be distorted by the tax system. The Chancellor abandoned his policy of moving towards fiscal neutrality, the consequences of which are to be seen in the monetary aggregates, where M0—the figure to which we are supposed to pay attention—is 50 per cent. outside its maximum target range. M3 is at 20 per cent. inflation per year. Building society lending is a critical component of the difficulty in which the Government have found themselves, but banks and building societies have brought into existence a group of people whose expectations you will not be able to meet and whose living standards you are now attacking. Building society lending is rising at 24 per cent. a year as a direct result of the Chancellor's deregulation of financial markets and not pursuing a policy of fiscal neutrality.

Even if the Government reduce inflation, will that have the beneficial effects on the balance of payments that you

[Mr. Jim Cousins]

anticipate? That is blind faith unsupported by any policy. The Government have no industrial policy, but they do not want one. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told us at lunchtime, in the context of the GEC-Plessey merger, that the time for strategic planning had gone. There is no industrial policy, so you must rely on blind faith and hope that if inflation decreases the balance of payments will return to even-steven or surplus. There is no evidence for that belief. It may be that our economy, encouraged by your policies, will structurally produce balance of payments deficits because we lend long and borrow short and because we have become too dependent on dealing on world financial markets as a substitute—this point was made in the effective speech made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)—for building our industry and economic activity.

My constituency is in a region that over the past two years has begun to benefit from the trickle in the consumer boom. One third of the increase in regional GDP is accounted for by wage increases in the education and health sectors and by an expansion of financial services. That is a dangerously narrow base on which to advance GDP, and that defect is reflected throughout the country. The Government have no industrial policy and no strategy for industrial growth. They are dealing in magic politics and believe that a reduction in inflation will solve the balance of payments deficit.

We need an industrial strategy that is linked to the financial markets. We need to make pension funds more responsible. They must have longer-term vision and be more accountable to the people whose savings they represent.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has had his 10 minutes. The hon. Gentleman has burdened the Chair with many responsibilities this evening. When he catches the eye of the Chair on another occasion, I hope that he will speak through it to the Government.

7.14 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I have never heard such a catalogue of economic crimes laid at the door of Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) returned us to a macro-economic discussion, following a most sensitive, compelling and sincere speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley). It is not a central tenet of Government economic policy that a reduction in inflation will lead to the balance of payments deficit disappearing. We hope that it will reduce and become a surplus, but there are other influences acting on it.

I should like to add to the tributes paid to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) for the capable way in which he chaired the interesting Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. I note that its report was passed by the narrow margin of two votes, which shows how difficult it is to pass a Select Committee report that goes into not qualitative judgments of overall levels of public expenditure but rather narrow and esoteric points, although substantial in value, about transfer payments and their composition in general Government expenditure.

The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has, not for the first time, done the House a service by the way in which it took evidence from a number of economic advisers, including the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. It has given us an opportunity to read the answers to questions that I am sure many hon. Members would like to pose.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that two members of the Committee who would have voted in favour of the report were busy in the Chamber taking part in the debate on shipbuilding? It was not passed with the narrow support that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Nelson: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Lady would have supported this excellent report.

I am glad that the Government have been able to dip the overall level of expenditure below 40 per cent. of GDP. I believe that anticipated expenditure of £178 billion for the forthcoming financial year will maintain all the electoral promises that we made and continue the excellent spending programmes that the Government have increased, most notably those for health and education, which account for the largest market increases. The Government will bring about welcome improvements in the spending of the Department of Social Security and on roads and infrastructure.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling devoted his speech to one major subject, so I shall deal with a matter to which in future the Treasury should be more receptive. The United States will not for much longer be able to put off tackling—in some ways progressively—its massive budget deficit. In doing so, it will have to resolve the problem of defence expenditure. It has done so this year, but increasingly over the years it is inevitable that it will seek economies in its international defence obligations. It is better for Britain and other members of NATO to be prepared to spend moneys to maintain our common defence obligations in NATO and Europe. The Ministry of Defence will in future be asking the Government for substantial real increases in its budget to compensate for the American withdrawal and the economies in Europe and elsewhere on the various NATO fronts.

I should like to follow some of the persuasive and excellent remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who spoke of the level of savings and what should be done about them. It is alarming to read chart 2·8 in the Autumn Statement, which graphically shows the enormous reduction in the propensity to save. With an anticipated ratio of saving of 3·5 per cent. in the forthcoming year, we are returning to the levels of saving that were evident in the early 1950s. It is a question that has not, I believe, been answered either in the Autumn Statement or by the Select Committee.

The real reasons for the propensity for saving in this country to have fallen so dramatically over the past couple of years have not been explained. It is accounted for not wholly by the fiscal and other incentives that have been given to investment in property, but far more by the

uncertainty about fluctuations in, and the actual level of, inflation which have led people to pull out of holding money and to put the money into goods and expenditure.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nelson: No, because we have limited time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

I believe strongly, for those reasons, that the Chancellor, in the run-up to the Budget, should consider carefully and radically encouraging new forms of saving. I say with some sorrow, that we should recognise that personal equity plans have been a flop, although they were a good idea, because the management costs and bank commissioning fees have not made them worth while. We should scrap that idea. Encouragement to personal investment and savings will never be effective or taken seriously until we give a straight tax break on the extent to which people can move a proportion of their gross earnings into personal savings without having to go through saving institutions or some form of trust.

As Conservatives, we should believe in the plurality of those investment decisions and the responsibility of the individual to make those investments. Providing tax relief can be constructive—as it has been in France and other countries—in a way that does not allow substantial abuse, we should be moving away from a system that has given total tax relief towards the purchase of homes, but no tax relief towards capital provision for the future. As we consider the future liabilities that we know we shall have to meet for an increasingly elderly proportion of people in this country, we should realise that the only way to enable people to meet their own requirements and not place too heavy a burden on the state is by encouraging more direct and simple personal incentives towards saving and investment. I hope that other Conservative Members will join me in applauding my right hon. Friend the Chancellor if he can do that in March.

7.23 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), but I do not want to spend time on personal equity plans and the taxation of savings.

Each time we have these debates, there are references to the Labour Government of 1974-79 and to the inflation rates at that time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) pointed out, when Labour left office in 1979, the inflation rate was 8 per cent. and falling. If one compares that with the present inflation rate, it was not bad. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East said, the Chancellor has not had to deal with a 300 per cent. increase in oil prices or with an explosion in commodity prices. In the 1970s, high inflation led by oil prices, commodity prices and wages chased prices, which gave us massive inflation. That is not the case now; we are living in a different environment.

Conservative Members have made many comments about Labour policies for the future. The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) referred to the Chancellor's questions about what our policies would be on taxation and on public expenditure. Hugh Gaitskell said many years ago that Labour was the party of high taxation, and that was the basis of Labour party policy. We believed in services and having the taxation to pay for them. We accept that we live in a different environment, but Labour is the party of fair taxation. That does not necessarily mean a high standard rate of income tax, but fair taxation throughout the economy.

The Conservatives have reduced several taxes over the years, such as the tax on investment premium income, which, like other taxes, has now gone by the board. There are many ways to redress the balance in our society without having a high income tax rate. The Labour party believes in a proper and appropriate standard of taxation —which does not necessarily mean a high income tax rate —and a proper balance in public expenditure.

The Chancellor and Conservative Members applaud the fact that we no longer have a public sector borrowing requirement, but instead a public sector debt repayment. It is not surprising that a Government who want to repay the national debt do not have a great deal of sympathy with those who are suffering as a result of high interest rates. The Chancellor said earlier that the interest rate increase policy was working and that that was why people were feeling the pinch.

If the Government are trying to repay the national debt as a matter of public policy, it is hardly surprising that they have no common sympathy with home owners, small business men and those who use credit cards for consumption, who are paying 28 per cent. APR. Many hon. Members, especially the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), showed some unease at the Chancellor relying entirely on a policy of regulating the economy by using interest rates.

To give him some credit, the Chancellor said in an intervention that other nation states were moving away from credit controls. He mentioned Canada, the United States, France and Italy as going down the same road. In 1981, when there was a consumer boom in the United States, the United States Government withdrew credit cards from circulation and the credit consumer boom collapsed quickly.

I am not suggesting that the Government should move to a programme of taking credit cards out of the system, but I caution the Chancellor against limiting his options in such a way that he seems to say to outside investors and those who are financing our balance of payments deficit by investing in our economy at 13 per cent., "Is that interest rate enough for you, or do you want more?" We may lose control of our own economy by reliance on a single interest file policy. The Chancellor mentioned the French, but I should be surprised if the French Government will relinquish a series of credit controls, including control of bank spending, to conform with policies such as those to which the Chancellor referred.

Hon. Members referred to the massive balance of payments deficit of £15 billion, and it is hardly surprising that it has been taken up by manufactured goods coming in from abroad. Since 1979, we have so run down the manufacturing side of our economy and placed such reliance on services that it was inevitable that, with the overheating of the economy, goods would then come in from abroad.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East referred to Middlesbrough, my constituency. About 50,000 jobs were lost in Middlesbrough from 1979 to 1981, while the present Foreign Secretary was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Jobs were lost in steel, chemicals, shipbuilding and foundry work, and those jobs will never come back to

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

Teesside. We have the urban development corporation, which will have a budget of £172 million, and it seeks to lift the area, but 50,000 jobs cannot be re-created.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Would the hon. Gentleman like to mention a single major industrialised country where large numbers of jobs have not been lost in the steel industry or in shipbuilding, in countries that have such a capacity?

Mr. Bell: Jobs have been lost in many western nations. There are about 28 million unemployed in the OECD countries at present. That is a great tragedy, both for our country and for those which followed in the tracks of the Government in 1979. It was a great misfortune for the 50,000 people of Middlesbrough who were working but who are no longer working, and in that sense an entire generation has been wiped out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East referred to the Prime Minister's walkabout on that sacred site in Middlesbrough. I did not know that it would be referred to today, but I went down there last Friday. I found the site still empty. Now and again the Prime Minister has meetings at which she insists that something be built on that site between now and the general election; I have no idea why it should be on that plot specifically.

We are witnessing an indictment of the Government's policy on manufacturing industry. The consequence of years of running down manufacturing industry throughout the country is that, with the consumer boom, exports are not keeping pace with imports and manufactured goods are coming in from abroad. We have a destabilised economy that is not balanced in any way.

The Chancellor made the best speech that I have heard him make in five years, and I say that in all humility. One of the unforeseen consequences of the excellent performances of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East has been that they have obliged the Chancellor to lift his game. He has been obliged to take the House of Commons into account more and to give us a speech that was interesting and illuminating—although it was not sufficiently illuminating to tell us whether he proposes to take the advice of the Bank of England that there should not be tax reductions in this year's Budget. The Chancellor would not give any indication of what exchange rate policy should be, and I thought that very sensible of him.

Last year's Budget combined reduced interest rates with reduced income tax. The reduction in the income tax on higher salaries from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent.—a reduction of one third in one go—created a climate for the consumer boom that brought imports rushing in and, in effect, destabilised the economy. At the time, we applauded the Chancellor's reduction of interest rates. That policy was right and proper, but the Budget gave so much back that it created a climate for spending. The mistake that the Chancellor made then gave rise to our present problems. According to newspaper reports, the Bank of England has advised the Chancellor to follow a tight fiscal policy as well as a policy of high interest rates, and on this occasion perhaps he will take that king of advice.

The hon. Member for Chichester referred to the lack of saving in our society. I am reminded of my visit to the United States last year, during which I saw a bumper sticker which simply said, "I am spending my children's inheritance." Under the present Government and the present Chancellor, we are squandering the inheritance of the British people. Lower taxes, reductions in services, poorer education and a poorer infrastructure all mean that we are not investing in future generations. I wonder where our economy will be when oil revenues begin to fall and all our heirlooms are sold.

7.33 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I want to explain why I support the policy of high interest rates. The first question that hon. Members ask as they watch many of their constituents going through agony is whether there is an alternative. In our previous debate on the economy, many of my right hon. and hon. Friends said that they wondered whether we should have either some form of selective control on lending or some direction of lending—a return to the old days before the banks became very much freer, particularly in London. My hon. Friends concluded that there was no possibility of relieving their constituents' agony in that way.

In this debate, the idea that has emerged is one that has long been favoured by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern). My hon. Friend will forgive me for saying that he is one of the most influential of my hon. Friends. When he advances an argument—I regret that on this occasion I concluded that I disagreed with him—it should be properly argued. My hon. Friend says that there is now a strong case for the introduction of a British loi Monory, which he says would alter the savings ratio in a helpful way. There can be no argument but that the savings ratio has fallen substantially—from 14 per cent. in the late 1970s and early 1980s to 1·3 per cent. according to recent figures. It is important to appreciate that the savings ratio is a net figure; it is the difference between saving and borrowing.

My hon. Friend was right to draw attention to paragraph 2.30 of the Autumn Statement, which identifies the fall in employers' contributions to pension funds in recent years as one of the factors in the decline of the savings ratio. I shall not elaborate that point, which my hon. Friend made very well. I am sure that he will agree that it is not the figure for saving but the figure for borrowing that is wrong. Up to November last year, the increase in bank borrowing was 27·3 per cent. higher than in the previous year. It is that figure which has had a distorting effect and has reduced the savings ratio and it is that figure which needs to be changed.

I do not think that my hon. Friend's proposal would have the dramatic effect this year for which he hopes. Furthermore, it would introduce yet another distortion into the tax system. One thing for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be remembered with admiration when he comes to retire from his high office is his reform of corporation tax. In that case, he was able to apply his belief in fiscal neutrality. The measure was criticised somewhat at the time, but it has been an outstanding success. My right hon. Friend also believes in fiscal neutrality in relation to the taxation of private individuals, but, for various political reasons, he has not proceeded to apply it to private taxation. Nevertheless, the introduction of a new distortion would make it more

difficult to introduce fiscal neutrality at some stage in the future. In this instance, it would be an entirely unnecessary distortion.

For the sake of argument, let us assume that the Chancellor goes away from today's debate saying, "I do not want to introduce a distortion, but the lads are in such disarray and so hate watching their constituents go through agony that I must do something, even if it mucks up the tax system." Even if that happened, the measure would not come into effect until the end of June. High interest rates may have to continue into June or July, but by the time interest rates are likely to come down the broad mass of the public will only just be starting to notice the distortion.

Once the distortion has been introduced and everybody has been told that the new Jerusalem is at hand—Back Benchers will go round constituency associations saying that the new savings measures are the most wonderful thing ever, in the exaggerated terms which I have come to realise are inseparable from politics—it will be impossible to withdraw it, even when interest rates have fallen. I would respectfully suggest to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham, who, as I say, is so influential, that I hope he will not lead our colleagues astray on that matter.

Sir Peter Hordern: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He speaks about a perfect world, where there would be fiscal neutrality and no relief for mortgage interest, but I must ask my hon. Friend what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object. When my right hon. Friend wishes to introduce fiscal neutrality in mortgage tax relief, he comes up against the Prime Minister. I regret to say that the Prime Minister in this instance is absolutely immovable. My argument is not addressed solely to the need to find tax incentives on savings and equities, and the advantages which I believe will accrue from that. I also want to try to carry on the process of democratisation which we have seen with the freeing of trade unions and the housing market.

Mr. Budgen: I believe that my hon. Friend will agree that his argument would be very much stronger if it were possible to change the law on taxation at the very moment that interest rates go up, but it cannot be done until the end of June, and it is probable that the agony will already be being eased by then.

As to my hon. Friend's wider point about the political forces that have governed the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I can only say that I have always observed that one of the great charms of politics is its unpredictability, and leave his general argument at that.

I suspect that the second question that my hon. Friends will be turning over in their minds is whether the Chancellor will over do it. Will the squeeze be kept on for too long? Will this agony be made much worse and unnecessarily worse? All we can really say about that is that there is no evidence from the Chancellor's track record that he has pursued the defeat of inflation with any mindless and excessive zeal. A Chancellor who has enjoyed the advantages of 5 per cent. inflation per annum throughout his entire period of Chancellorship cannot be described as a sound money bigot. He says that he was successful in 1985. It is true that in 1985 inflation as recorded by the, in my opinion, rather inadequate RPI did go up to 7 per cent., and for a brief period interest rates were increased to 14 per cent. However, it was not the 14 per cent. that got him out of trouble, but two other factors. One was that petrol, oil and other commodity prices dropped sharply and the other was that sterling appreciated. As soon as those two happy horsemen came to his rescue, the money supply was allowed to increase once again.

We live in an electoral cycle. It will be possible now to have a bit of agony. It will not be possible, because the lads will not stand it, to have a great deal of agony in a year or 18 months' time. Therefore, for all those reasons I hope that my hon. Friends will give the Chancellor their support.

7.43 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I continue to be amazed at the gullibility of the Conservative Members, because most of them appear to listen with reverence to another edition of the tales of the babes of Dorneywood from this latter-day member of the family of the Brothers Grimm.

When we look at the Autumn Statement and the various forecasts that the Chancellor has made in the past year or two, we must admit that in every case he has been a failure. He promised us that inflation would be running at 4 per cent. and it is more than 6 per cent. and rising; and that the balance of payments deficit would be £4 billion, but it will probably be more in the region of £14 billion this financial year. The Chancellor thought that imports would increase by about 6·5 per cent., but we know already that the increase will be more like 13 per cent.-plus. He thought exports would increase at the rate of 3 per cent., but we know that we shall be lucky to obtain 1·5 per cent. He thought that interest rates would remain stable, but we know that they have virtually doubled—from 7·5 per cent. to 13 per cent., and who knows where they might go in future? The Chancellor thought that the money supply would range somewhere between 1 and 5 per cent. and already we know that it is more like 8 per cent.

When forecasting for every major item in the Budget, and for expenditure, the Chancellor got it wrong. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Government are in a state of some panic about using high interest rates as virtually their only policy in this sector and are concerned about the problems caused to them by the agony and the pain felt by some people, which the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) graphically explained.

I was staggered, too, by the way in which the Chancellor almost rushed to remove the cost of mortgages from the retail prices index. The Chancellor must be living in cloud cuckoo land with Rupert Bear and Algy, if he believes that the home owner regards an extra payment on the mortgage as something not to be counted in his or her spending in any particular month. There is no way that we can avoid responsibility by not including mortgage rate repayments in the RPI.

Another matter which struck me was the massive complacency of the Chancellor, which appears to be echoed by most of other hon. Members who have spoken, about the great economic miracle which has been performed in the past decade. That miracle can only be seen by looking down a telescope, with a long set of blinkers on the end of it, focused somewhere in the London area. The figures for the number of jobs in all of the standard planning regions, the moment one moves beyond a line from the Severn to the northern side of the

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

Wash, tell a story of dismal failure. Conservative Members could do themselves a good turn if they studied those figures, which I shall now give them.

I shall begin with Wales, because I believe we should start with the most important part of the United Kingdom and the one which has suffered most. In Wales, there are 130,000 fewer jobs than there were in 1979; in Scotland 173,000 fewer jobs; in the north of England 107,000 fewer jobs; in the north-west of England 337,000 fewer jobs; in Yorkshire and Humberside 77,000 fewer jobs; and in the west midlands 70,000 fewer jobs. That is a grand total of 894,000 fewer jobs now than in 1979. A total of 234,000 of the extra jobs that have been created in the regions which I have mentioned are part-time jobs for women. The state of the British economy, in by far the greater part of the country, is a sad tale of woe and failure.

It is true that more jobs have been created in the south-east, East Anglia, the south-west and the east midlands, but that is because the Government have almost completely ignored the needs of the northern and western regions of the United Kingdom. I have left out Northern Ireland deliberately, because I accept that the problems of that area are far greater than any damage that the Chancellor is doing to the economy.

The Chancellor likes to talk of the success of the British economy and the wonderful way in which it is working compared with other economies. On the latest figures available, inflation in the United Kingdom is 6·4 per cent. compared with 3 per cent. in France, 1·4 per cent. in Germany, 4·8 per cent. in Italy, 4·2 per cent. in the United States, 4·1 per cent. in Canada and 0·5 per cent. in Japan. All those figures relate to the end of last year and show that Britain is at the bottom of the league of major industrialised countries.

Short-term interest rates are 13 per cent. in Britain, compared with 8 per cent. in France, 4·8 per cent. in Germany, 12 per cent. in Italy, 8·3 per cent. in the United States of America and 4·4 per cent. in Japan. The figures for Canada are not available. Again, which economy is the worst? Why, it is the British economy.

Although we are not at the bottom of the ladder for unemployment figures, we are near it. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figures for the end of last year, unemployment in Japan is 2·5 per cent., in Canada 7·8 per cent., in the United States 5·3 per cent., in Germany 6·4 per cent., in France 10·4 per cent. and in Britain 8·4 per cent. Again Britain is doing badly. It is only because of the distorted nature of the British economy that Conservative Members can comfort themselves in the apparent success of the Chancellor's policies.

The truth is that we have had a decade of neglect which has not been in the interests of creating a balanced and prosperous nation. *[Laughter.]* We have a divided nation. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) may laugh, but if he cared to come to Wales or to visit the north of England or Scotland, he would see a different picture. It may be hard for him to admit that some areas have high unemployment and that those who earn there gain poor wages. He may like to come with me one weekend and see the poverty and deprivation that the Government have caused by deliberately taking money from pensioners and the long-term unemployed and by reducing spending on the regions by two thirds. No wonder we no longer have those jobs.

When he replies, perhaps the Minister can tell us exactly what judgment the Chancellor has made of the amount that demand will need to slow down for him either to reduce interest rates or at least ensure that they do not climb higher. I must admit that, in view of his previous forecasts, it may not be worth while getting an answer to that question, but I should like one. How long will the agony continue?

7.53 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): One of the most interesting things about our economic debates is that most of the debate these days takes place on the Conservative side of the House. After having listened to such a pedestrian speech packed full of tedious statistics, I should like to return to the Autumn Statement and to public spending with which it is principally concerned.

The Government's objective on public spending has been changed twice during the past 10 years. The objective was first to reduce it in absolute terms and then to hold it constant; now it is to ensure that it falls as a proportion of GDP. I make no complaint about that, because, with the growth in the economy, that is something that we can reasonably afford to do, but I am worried about the projections for the next three years.

Although the achievement on this front, as shown in table 1.1 of the Autumn Statement, is impressive, as the trend is moving in the right direction, I remain worried that the target is not as ambitious as it might be. We should press on to return to the levels shown at the top of the table—for example 36 per cent. of GDP in 1964-65. My second point, which was raised by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, is whether that is a sensible way to control the overall level of spending. I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) said and I do not share the view of the Select Committee that this is not a sensible way to proceed. It has the virtue of simplicity, it is intelligible and it does not make sense to include transfer payments.

However, I do not agree with what my hon. Friend said about the Committee's recommendation on the need for a public sector balance sheet. I know that this is a difficult area. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary told the Select Committee that it would be difficult to get a market value for a prison. Of course that is true, but as a member of the Public Accounts Committee I have been shocked at the number of witnesses who have been unable to say what assets they are responsible for. For example, the Crown Estate Commissioners appeared before the Committee recently; they, who are the equivalent of a property company, produced a balance sheet for the first time only in the past 12 months. There is tremendous scope for improvement.

Departments of State should know what assets are under their control. One way of doing that is to require them to produce a balance sheet. That would have the advantage that we would then know what additions had been made and what the total level of capital spending was. That information in the Autumn Statement is deficient and I hope that, when the public expenditure

White Paper is published, we shall have the table that appeared last year which showed the Government's total capital spending.

Such a balance sheet would also show capital receipts satisfactorily, which does not happen at present. Privatisation proceeds are deducted from total Government spending and the proceeds from the sale of council houses are deducted from total spending on council housing, so there is room for improvement. The production of a public sector balance sheet would be a good idea.

We have had a good deal of discussion about inflation. Every Conservative Member subscribes to the principal objective of the Government's economic policy, which is trying to defeat inflation by monetary rather than fiscal means. I have two worries, one of which was mentioned by a Labour member of the Select Committee and is referred to in the report. The Government's goal is always being moved one year out, so that the goal of 3 per cent. inflation always seems to be 3 per cent. away. We need to try to set targets to which we can adhere or people will not believe the targets that the Treasury sets itself.

Secondly, it is not widely recognised that if, instead of analysing the RPI in the normal way, which is between different items of spending, one analyses it as Christopher Fildes did in an article in *The Spectator* in December, which was between the public sector elements and the private sector elements of the RPI, one sees that the Government are responsible for a considerable amount of the inflation from which we are now suffering.

According to the October figures, inflation measured by the RPI was 6·4 per cent, whereas public sector inflation was 7·8 per cent. If mortgage payments were included, it would be 13·8 per cent. On the other hand, private sector inflation was 4·8 per cent. That discrepancy was due to the fact that nationalised industry prices were rising at 7·5 per cent., local authority rents were rising at 7·5 per cent. and rates were rising at 8·5 per cent. Part of the solution to the present problem of inflation lies in the hands of the Government and certainly in the hands of local government, because those prices are fixed by the Government and local government. We can expect to see an improvement when some of those figures come nearer to the general level of price inflation.

The Committee also examined the official statistics. I very much agree with the view that we must have statistics on which we can reasonably rely. Much doubt has been expressed about the balance of payments statistics. It is a well-known fact that, if we add up all the balance of payments statistics throughout the world, we end up with a large deficit, which suggests that something is wrong somewhere. We see regular adjustments to the United Kingdom balance of payments figures, which are usually favourable for the Government, because the deficit is normally reduced as a result of subsequent adjustments. I hope that the balance of payments figures will form part of the Government's inquiry, because it is important that we should have statistics upon which we can rely.

We have heard a great deal in the debate about forecasts. The Treasury has been criticised for the forecasts that it made in the Red Book at the time of the Budget, but if we consider almost every other forecast made at that time about the balance of payments, we find that the forecasts were all around £3 billion, £4 billion, £5 billion or £6 billion. No one forecast a figure near the real outturn. There is a lemming-like quality about economic forecasters who have a tendency to assume that things will continue as they are today. I am not so pessimistic.

For example, I am inclined to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) that the savings ratio problem is beginning to resolve itself. One of the principal reasons why the ratio has fallen so low is, as we can see from a table in the Autumn Statement, the close correlation between the movement of the savings ratio over a number of years and the movement of inflation. As inflation comes down rapidly, people feel the need to save far less. There is far more confidence in the economy, so they feel less need to save for the future.

That has now changed. All the evidence shows that there is more uncertainty. There will be less borrowing, which is an important element because we are dealing with a net figure. The problem is therefore already starting to resolve itself. If we were to have a Monory proposal, I doubt whether it could be introduced by the Treasury as early as June, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West suggested. The PEP scheme did not come in until 1 January following the Budget, so I agree with my hon. Friend that the problem would have started to resolve itself before we could even tackle it.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer should cut income tax further in the Budget. With such a large public sector debt repayment, I see no reason why another 1p should not be cut off income tax or why thresholds should not be increased by more than the rate of inflation. I should like to see something done about the national insurance contributions made by the lower paid. That matter is mentioned in the submission of the Institute of Directors. I do not have time to develop the point, but I am sure that my hon. Friends will be aware of the point to which I refer. There is a poverty trap when one first comes to make these payments, and again when the rates increase. I should also like to see something done about capital gains tax in relation to investments in unquoted companies, a matter which has been raised by the Conservative Back-Bench small business committee.

I fully support the economic strategy in the Autumn Statement. We have every reason to be confident about the future of the United Kingdom economy.

8.4 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): The widespread reaction to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement and his recent pronouncements on the economic situation in Britain shows clearly that many people, including those whom the Chancellor might normally think of as supporters, believe that he has got it badly wrong.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) appeared not to like statistics, particularly when they show the Government in a bad light, but none the less, it is clear that the forecasts were very wrong, particularly those on inflation, but also those relating to the balance of payments and trade deficit which is three times greater than the original prediction.

The serious economic developments that we have seen in recent months are very much related to last year's Budget in which, again, the Chancellor got it disastrously wrong. Many of us reacted strongly to that Budget for what we felt were the immoral giveaways to the richest in

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

society, but it is now clear that the Budget was also economically very foolhardy and wholly inappropriate to the economic situation in which Britain found itself. The Chancellor was warned at the time, particularly by Labour Members, that the Budget would lead to a boom in imports and that it would mean a serious trade deficit given the great weakness of the British manufacturing sector.

We are now given the Chancellor's forecast for trade recovery and how the balance of payments is supposed to improve over the next year, but is this forecast also to be disastrously wrong? The only cure that appears to be given is that of raising interest rates, but, in that sense, the Chancellor appears to remind us of 18th-century doctors who prescribed leeches for every ailment. The problem was that so many of the patients never recovered.

Let me cite some of the reactions to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and his economic policies. The Confederation of British Industry reported that many exporters appeared to be gloomy about the future. The Engineering Employers Federation felt that the Chancellor was misguided in the way that he thought that action on interest rates would do much to cure our trade deficit. There was widespread hostile reaction in many national newspapers and there was an encouraging headline in the *Daily Mail* which read:

"Has Nigel blown the next election?"

The Bank of England has also warned the Chancellor against tax cuts in the forthcoming Budget. Organisations such as the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses say that the interest rate increases are affecting detrimentally the fastest growing firms in the country. The chairman of Ferranti International is quoted in one newspaper as saying that, because of the interest rate increases, the company will look hard at its investment programme. Last but not least, the OECD report produced last December predicted a growing trade deficit for the United Kingdom which was in very worrying contrast with the Treasury's predictions. All that adds up to a strong weight of opinion against the Chancellor and Government economic policies.

The Civil Service and Treasury Select Committee, of which I am a member, has produced a worthwhile report, which, although often worded in a restrained and sometimes even coded manner, makes many telling criticisms of the Chancellor's policy and of the defects, as we see them, in the Autumn Statement. In particular, it points out inconsistencies in the Chancellor's exchange rate policies. Only last March, he was telling us that an exchange rate of DM3 to the pound was an anchor against inflation, but, by the end of the year, he had changed his tune, particularly as the exchange rate with the deutschmark was then 3·22. He was not so certain about what the anchor against inflation would be for the future. That is another worrying sign.

In the remaining time, I should like to highlight two issues which are of particular concern to me and will be worrying factors in the coming months and years. The regional effects of the Chancellor's policy have already been referred to. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), I come from the northern region of England which has, at best, seen only a partial economic recovery. We learn that, before an economic recovery can take place there, it will feel the recessionary effects of the measures to cure overheating in the south-east.

The Government seem to have no regional strategy or economic policy to deal with the undoubted regional division. The reaction in the northern region to the Chancellor's rise in interest rates was particularly unfavourable. Mr. Paul Torday, the regional director of the Northern CBI, said that he felt that Government policy was concentrating on the south and that there appeared to be an absence of any thought about how to deal with regional variations. The chambers of commerce in Tyne and Wear and on Teesside also expressed concern. However, when I raised these points with the Chancellor in the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, he said more or less, "Well, they would say those things wouldn't they? They feel that they've got to say them." He dismissed real and genuine concern as ritualistic mutterings.

The Chancellor's contempt for the region was also clear from his earlier remarks when he referred to Labour party policy to regenerate the regions as the "Yugoslav solution". Perhaps he should have considered West Germany, where there is a great deal of regional economic autonomy and no clear regional division or disparity of wealth such as exists in this country. Both inflation and unemployment are lower in West Germany.

The Chancellor's policy is undoubtedly bad news for the regions. There seems to be no regional measure to offset the negative effects of the Chancellor's policy. A recent report by Cambridge and Northern Ireland economic forecasters stated that there will be an ever-widening gap between the regions in Britain if present policies are pursued.

I am also concerned about the effect on Britain of the moves towards the creation of the single European market in 1992. The Chancellor's economic policies bode ill for Britain in the run-up to 1992. A recent article in *The Guardian* asked whether 1989 would be the year that Europe invaded Britain. I am worried that the bids and mergers from Europe mean that much of our industry appears to be ripe for takeover while in return we have no alternative strategy or a policy to defend our industries, particularly in the regions.

I am worried that, if we follow the present course we will become the poor relation of the EEC between now and 1992. The Chancellor's policies have contributed greatly to inequalities in Britain. Perhaps they are set now to contribute to inequalities on a Europeanwide scale where inequalities between rich and poor regions are already much wider than in America.

A Conservative Member who may or may not wish to admit to the remark now, said that the jury was out on the Chancellor. On the evidence available, the only verdict possible that the jury could return is one of guilty. The Autumn Statement is an autumn indictment of the Chancellor's policy failures.

8.13 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I subscribe fully to the comments made by my hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) who referred to the importance of fiscal neutrality and the need to avoid a British loi

Monory. Many Conservative Members in favour of fiscal neutrality accept the fact that mortgage interest relief is the exception that proves the rule.

I invite the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) —who is not in the Chamber at the moment—to enlighten us on some points when he replies to the debate for the Opposition. He is said to be possessed of a remarkable intellect as an economist and to have invented a new form of economics. I hope that he will spell out specifically what measures the Labour party would take to control credit expansion instead of using the interest rate mechanism. We have heard a lot of non-specific talk from Opposition Members, but I hope that the hon. Member for Vauxhall will tell us specifically how he would handle that.

I do not deny that high interest rates are unpopular, although many elderly people with savings and no debt have seen a welcome rise in their income. High interest rates on mortgages have a radical effect on disposable income. Those of us with large mortgages feel the effect keenly. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West did not exaggerate when he spoke of the agony that is felt in some quarters in that respect.

I have received a pretty clear message from my constituents. They have told me that high mortgage rates are unpleasant and unwelcome. However, high inflation is a worse enemy and an ever-present threat. Many people take a longer and less staccato view than the Labour party on this issue. If there are economic squalls—it is naive to suggest that they will not occur—it is far better to have the hand of this experienced Treasury team on the tiller who will take the necessary tough decisions than the old-fashioned and confused Socialist remedies from the Labour party, some of which we have heard again today.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield said, the medicine may be working more quickly than was expected. It is hardly surprising, when monetary policy is tightened, for conflicting signals to occur. The inclusion of mortgage interest in the retail prices index masks the fact that the underlying level of inflation has stayed broadly static since last July.

High interest rates have already reduced demand in the economy and the growth in house prices is declining. According to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, that trend continues to spread. Mortgage lending has fallen, and recent figures show that retail sales are slowing. One of the beneficial effects of the present policy is that it reaches directly to consumer spending rather than corporate and industrial spending and investment.

As the Chancellor said earlier, at the beginning of the decade the gearing ratio of British companies averaged out at about 45 per cent. The comparable figure now is little more than half that. Investment in the United Kingdom has increased over the past year by at least 12 per cent. That cannot be dismissed as a temporary trend, as it has clearly been the pattern for the past five years.

I do not disguise the fact that high interest rates will adversely affect some businesses, particularly smaller ones. However, for companies and individuals, rising inflation is a worse and more potent enemy.

The Treasury and the Civil Service Select Committee, in reviewing public expenditure and our debt profile, has made sensible comments about the need to enhance public debate through a comprehensive public sector balance sheet. Many of my constituents were appalled at the huge level of Government debt which characterised the 1960s and 1970s. However, they are deeply impressed with and support an economic policy which yields significant increases in public expenditure while achieving such a dramatic public sector debt repayment during this financial year. I agree with my colleagues that that is a signal achievement and a complete change from the previous pattern. It is one which our constituents note and respect greatly.

The Select Committee also referred to the level of expenditure on the National Health Service. In a year when the NHS has been the subject of a major review, it should not be forgotten that the review is set against a background of the largest injection of funding that the NHS has ever received. In other words, the review takes place against a position of confidence and strength. That is very different from the other great NHS review conducted by the previous Labour Government, which took place against a background of a desperate need to find savings and make cuts in NHS provision. Those cuts emasculated the NHS building programme, which we have restored fully and increased significantly. The Nottingham health authority benefited from that increasing expenditure. Under RAWP, we hope, and need, to do better —we are still 5 per cent. short of our target.

Next year, as the Select Committee makes clear, there will be an overall 9·5 per cent. increase in cash in the NHS which is a growth rate of 4·5 per cent. in real terms. I am grateful to the Select Committee for making clear how that figure was reached. It is a fine achievement. The purpose of the Prime Minister's National Health Service review is to ensure that that significant expenditure increase will be directly translated into similar increases in the quality and quantity of patient care. That is how we in Nottinghamshire will judge the review.

I was surprised not to find more in the report about the Government's programme of Third-world aid. I am not entirely in agreement with my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley). One must recognise the quality of the United Kingdom aid programme, which is acknowledged by the OECD's development assistance committee, and is well illustrated by the high priority it gives to the development of renewable natural resources. The increased budget announced this year means that our aid programme will increase by 18 per cent. over the next three years. Included in that figure is the expected cost of the Chancellor's widely praised sub-Saharan debt initiative. We have already set an example by writing off £300 million in loans to 14 African countries, and ours was the first country to subscribe in full to the World bank's general capital increase.

I turn briefly to four tangential points that I hope my right hon. Friend will consider in the run-up to his next Budget. The first concerns employee share ownership schemes—this is an important subject and one with which the Finance Bill Standing Committee wrestled last year. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) spoke eloquently on that subject. If we are serious about spreading share ownership more widely throughout society, we must consider the role that such schemes can play in enhancing and augmenting that objective, as well as motivating and improving the supply side of our economy. Share ownership schemes can help break down ancient barriers. They also clearly offer an additional savings benefit.

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

Secondly, there are in my constituency families who, faced with a competitive mortgage market, have changed their mortgagee. The effect of such a move—in which, technically, a new mortgage is drawn down, repaying the old one—is that any portion of the first mortgage that financed a home improvement, perhaps even 15 years ago, becomes ineligible for mortgage interest relief.

I cannot see how that can be fair, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will see whether anything can be done to clarify this point. At the very least, building societies and banks have a duty to make that situation clear to customers seeking to roll over their mortgages and who risk being caught in that way.

Thirdly, I refer to the Inland Revenue's consultation document on the taxation of non-domiciled individuals. Action rightly needs to be taken against various abuses, but I hope that care will be taken before changing the rules in respect of those whose arrangements with the United Kingdom authorities have already been made on the basis of the existing law on domicile. Valuable inward investment into the United Kingdom may be jeopardised by the current uncertainty. I note from a recent publication that some concern is felt by the DTI on that point. In any event, an early announcement by my right hon. Friend will be welcome.

Fourthly, the next Budget will be the right one in which to lift as many of the lower paid out of the tax net as possible. I urge my right hon. Friends to make that direct contribution to helping to defeat the poverty and employment trap, and to seize the opportunity to effect this great and important change.

I have strayed from the debate's main theme, but the essential facts remain. Our economy is strong. Inevitable economic difficulties are being courageously dealt with. The Opposition are unable to put forward any coherent alternative medicine—although we wait with interest for their wind-up speech. The country continues to trust my right hon. Friend's judgment, and that of his colleagues on the Treasury Bench.

8.23 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The strategy outlined by the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) applies to the south, and not to the north and to the part of the country from which I come. I intended speaking about interest rates, but about one and a half hours ago I received a telephone call from my constituency concerning a company whose progress I have followed in detail over many years and which tonight has made 90 people redundant. It is in that context that I shall comment on the Autumn Statement.

The company to which I refer, Miller Footwear of Cockermouth, has a good export record but has experienced certain difficulties over the past few years. It competes directly with South Korea and a number of other countries in the far east on their manufactures, which have in recent years been dependent on the value of sterling in international markets. With the fall in the value of the dollar over the past couple of years, the South Koreans and other far east nations producing footwear decided that, instead of exporting, for example, their Union Jack-clad "Reebok" footwear to America, they would move out of that market, because the price of their prodcts there was increasing as the value of the dollar fell. They redirected their exports to European markets, where exchange rates have moved more in parallel with far east currencies.

In the European market, the problem arises that, whereas many of our European competitors introduced import controls that single out far east products, the British Government failed to do so. The result is that exports of footwear from South Korea in particular have been directed mainly towards the United Kingdom. Its market share has been enhanced still further by the authorities' decision to raise interest rates. With the upward movement in sterling, South Korean footwear has become more competitively priced in the United Kingdom, and our markets are increasingly being crowded out by footwear imported from the far east whose manufacturers take advantage of an increasingly favourable sterling exchange rate.

That places in context what happens in the real world when the Government decide, in order to resolve, as I see it, a uniquely southern problem, to increase interest rates, inflate sterling's value, and draw in imports—leading to 90 people working for a footwear company in my constituency being placed in the dole queue.

Although there is a great shortage of skilled labour in the south and in certain sectors of industry in west Cumberland, many of those who have been made unemployed will find that the only jobs available to them are in industries whose capitalisation is low in terms of plant and equipment. The reason for that was outlined by the hon. Member for Gedling when he spoke about gearing in the sense of lending to assets. Companies that have failed to invest as a result of high interest rates but are willing to offer employment are invariably labour-intensive. Because they are not highly capitalised, they have to compete with low-wage economies overseas. That forces down the wages available to my constituents.

The product of the Government's strategy is a sucking in of imports, which become more competitive, driving people out of home industries into those that are either under-capitalised or should be more highly capitalised, with a higher degree of automation. The overall result is lower wages. Such companies tend to resist trade unionism. Employers in the region then adopt a brutal and ruthless approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) has had the same experience as I have, particularly over the past few months. There has been an increasing incidence of what I can only regard as brutal employers who almost but not quite flout the law, who reject trade unionism, who refuse to recognise trade unions in their plants and whose only intention is to secure the cheapest labour in conditions of high unemployment in areas such as mine.

As a result of that, while unemployment in west Cumberland has gone down over the past few years, we have seen the development of non-union, low-wage industry which, when we are playing around with exchange rates and interest rates in the way that we are today in Britain, can only lead to the creation of sensitive industries which can be wiped out in the cool breeze of international recession. On the one hand, I can accept that the Government's policy has led to an increase in employment in west Cumberland, but it has come about in

industries that are geared to that strategy, which is a southern strategy for resolving problems and difficulties in the south. We cannot continue on that basis.

Finally, let me deal with the specific problem which, although it affects all the United Kingdom, affects the south of England in a disproportionate way, and that is property price inflation. I want to leave the Government and those on the Government Benches with a thought that they would do well to consider.

I never believed that it was the miners who brought down the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in 1974. I had a theory at that time that the Government were brought down because of the collapse in property prices that took place after the high inflationary period for property in the early 1970s which we all remember. The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) shakes his head. He may have been in Downing street at the time. Perhaps he was an adviser to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. The levels of property price inflation in 1971, 1972 and early 1973 were just as high as they are today, and the gearing of earnings to house prices was as precariously balanced then as it is now. That was a major contributory factor to the fall of the Conservative Government in 1974. In the same way that the bubble burst then, it will burst again. When it bursts, it will burst with a vengeance and it will be reflected in the ballot box.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report refers towards the end to the unsatisfactory state of official statistics. During the evidence sessions I compared them to driving in the dark without headlights.

There is concern about trends in inflation, the current account of the balance of payments, and the rate of growth of GDP, which most commentators believe to be at an unsustainably high level. But at best, we have to rely on informed hunches to know the position of any of those key economic factors. Official statistics do not provide us with the basic information on which judgments can be made.

The Autumn Statement provides a wide range of choice on most of the key economic indicators. At the time of the Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor forecast a £4 billion deficit in the balance of payments current account. The Autumn Statement revises that upwards to £13 billion and the latest figures show that that total has already been exceeded before the year end.

But tucked away on page 50 of the Autumn Statement in the annexe to chapter two, we find described in paragraph 2A.7 the large overseas balancing item in the first half of 1988 of about £7 billion or, annualised, an amount equal to the forecast deficit for the whole year. The note goes on to explain most helpfully that that shows that

"there were either unrecorded net credits on the current account or unrecorded net capital inflows or, most likely, both."

On the most favourable assumption, the whole of that balancing item could be unrecorded visible or invisible exports, in which case there would be no deficit on current account this year. That is not likely, but it is equally improbable that no part of that balancing item is represented by unrecorded overseas earnings. It seems likely that the true deficit will prove to be less than the Autumn Statement forecast of £13 billion for the year. But we do not know, and we should know with greater accuracy.

Examining the GDP statistics, we find that in the first half of 1988 GDP grew by 6 per cent. on the output measure, but by only 2·5 per cent. on the expenditure measure. The Autumn Statement follows the normal practice of averaging the various measures to arrive at a likely growth rate of around 4·5 per cent. But which, if either, of those measures is correct makes a great deal of difference to judgments about whether GDP growth is unsustainably high.

Growth of over 6 per cent. is almost certainly more than the economy can sustain, but 2·5 per cent. is just as certainly not unsustainable. It is a serious situation when the difference between those two measures for the current year is almost equal to the total growth of GDP during the period of the previous Labour Government.

On the other hand, the measurement of inflation is perhaps subject to less uncertainty than the other statistics, particularly if the short-term distortions created by changes in mortgage interest rates are stripped out. For example, inflation as measured by the GDP deflator has proved stubbornly stable at between 4·5 and 5·5 per cent. between 1983 and 1987, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) made clear, showing that perhaps rather too little attention has been paid to the measures necessary to exert that steady downward pressure on inflation which is claimed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to be the cornerstone of his policy.

It can be said that statistics do not matter. The chief economic adviser refuted my suggestion that great policy decisions were taken on the basis of rather unreliable statistics. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made it clear that he places little reliance on statistics. To an extent, that is comforting and reassuring, given the deplorable and unreliable state of those statistics. But there are others who operate in the financial markets at home and abroad who take the official statistics rather more seriously than Ministers do. Confidence in sterling and in the performance of the economy can be seriously undermined by false signals from official economic statistics.

Furthermore, statistics have some direct influence on Minister's decisions in the management of the economy. When I asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor whether his fiscal judgment would have been different if the information available to him at the time of the Budget had given him a rather more accurate reflection of the likely growth of GDP, he replied that his fiscal judgment would have remained the same, but:

"Had I had the greater knowledge which you posit, then what we would have had is a tighter monetary policy, a tighter monetary stance, and indeed a tighter monetary stance at an earlier date, even before the Budget."

I interpret that as meaning that if official statistics had shown my right hon. Friend how strongly GDP was growing last spring and summer we would not have seen reductions in interest rates during the summer to the low point of 7·5 per cent. Without that unnecessary and perverse relaxation of monetary policy, we might have avoided the need for interest rates to go as high as the current level of 13 per cent. That provides an additional

[Mr. John Watts]

and powerful reason for the Government to give a rather higher priority to improving the quality of the official statistics, as we urged in our report that they should.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has explained that interest rates are the most effective short-term economic regulator and that fiscal policy should be set to achieve longer-term objectives. In that he is right. He should not be deflected from his policy of continuing to reduce the burden of direct taxation and of moving towards a reduction in the standard rate of income tax from 25p to 20p in the pound. Clearly, the public finances would enable him to achieve that in this year's Budget and still achieve a substantial Budget surplus, but my right hon. Friend's policy has always been to make further reductions in the standard rate when it is prudent to do so. With the continuing and unexpectedly strong performance of the economy, it clearly needs no further stimulus now. So I do not urge my right hon. Friend to make further reductions in the rates of income tax this year.

However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) pointed out, if the Chancellor made no changes in income tax there would be a significant and automatic tightening of an already tight fiscal stance. So there should be scope for over-indexation of personal allowances. The opportunity should be taken, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) suggested, to remove more people on low incomes from the tax net to increase the advantages of taking employment as against drawing benefit.

These measures aside, I believe that most of our constituents would prefer further improvement in their disposable income by means of prudent reductions in interest rates when conditions permit rather than through reductions in income tax in the immediate future. Those reductions can wait to be enjoyed in future years.

The last Labour Government would have loved to face the problems arising from over-rapid economic growth that this Government face. That Labour Government faced the problems of economic failure and decline. The Government now face the problems that come from economic success. The strength of the economy and of the public finances ensure that the problems of the inflation blip and the increased import bill can be ridden out. The Labour party must face up to the fact that we shall be able to hit the target of a 20p standard rate of income tax before the next general election, after which that party will still be in opposition.

8.44 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): At the end of November the Chancellor said that the economy was fundamentally very strong. According to *The Sunday Times*, he went on to say that the rise in interest rates this year would ensure that that continued. Yet a recent MORI poll showed that economic optimism has plunged to a record seven-year low. The last time economic opinion was so pessimistic was in the autumn of 1981. That was a significant date because it marked the depths of the recession of 1979-81, when 20 per cent. of British industry was wasted.

These are two rather different pictures drawn by people who stand in many ways on the same footing. They all use the same statistics and examine the same economic trends. They all support a demand-led, free enterprise, capitalist economy. In the coming months we shall see which of their forecasts is correct.

One of the more entertaining aspects of the recent economic debates has been the conflict between the Chancellor and his Treasury team and former members of Conservative Treasury teams, including an ex-Prime Minister. The Chancellor has painted a vivid picture of a booming economy and rising living standards. He has gone further and said that this is an unprecedented boom in our post-war history—a "first time ever".

I hesitate to involve myself in the argument on the Conservative Benches, but it is reasonable to compare this Chancellor's statistics with those of some of his Conservative predecessors. At the height of Reginald Maudling's boom from 1963 to 1964 there was an 11 per cent. growth of the gross domestic product over a two-year period, with an inflation rate of about 2 per cent. At the height of the Barber boom from 1973 to 1974, a 10 per cent. increase in GDP was achieved, with an inflation rate of 4·5 per cent. This Chancellor has equalled Maudling's record on the GDP, but achieved only half the rate of growth in the Barber boom—yet inflation has risen to 6·4 per cent.

The Chancellor speaks of an overheated economy. What does that mean? It means that manufacturing industry, which he says is leaner and fitter, is incapable of meeting the demand that has resulted from the consumer-led boom. The reason why industry cannot meet the demand is the lack of investment during the time of this Government. Investment has only just passed the level at which it stood in 1979. In the third quarter of last year manufacturing employment fell by another 18,000.

It is true that output per head has risen by 50 per cent. since 1975, but it has risen from a very low level. According to a Labour research survey, productivity in British industry remained, in 1986, 30 per cent. lower than in American industry and 25 per cent. lower than in European industry. In the three months to October 1988, imports rose by 14 per cent. and exports by only 0·5 per cent.

The high cost of borrowing, with nine increases in interest rates since the Budget, will slow down the rate of investment in manufacturing industry and the rate of productivity increases. The over-valued pound will price British goods out of world markets and attract imports on an ever-increasing scale. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was right. Even the increases in productivity have been achieved by the threat of unemployment, by the managerial counter-revolution, by greater exploitation of working people and by attacks on the rights of working people to organise in trade unions. In the next few months there will be rising unemployment, stagnation of the economy and rising inflation, much of it Government-inspired.

We should not forget that the threat of a world trade war has not receded. The row over American meat treated with hormones may be, to mix a metaphor, over peanuts in terms of world trade: it involves about $100 million on each side. That argument may be resolved, but it is a portent for the future. I repeat a point I have made before: America imports 30 per cent. of the rest of the world's exports and exports only 6 per cent. of its own production. Britain and West Germany export one third of all they make, and some European countries export 50 per cent. of what they produce. Given those figures, Europe cannot

win any protracted trade war with America—certainly not Britain, whose economy is under-productive, under-skilled, under-researched, under-trained and not provided with enough investment.

The process has been hidden by the £70 billion of oil revenue, but oil is a finite resource and revenue is declining as world oil prices continue to fall. The process has also been hidden by the billions of pounds that have been taken as a result of this Government's privatisation policies, but most of the family silver has been sold off. Unless the Government can devise methods to privatise the air that we breathe or the pavements on which we walk, those options are fast disappearing. We face a period of stagflation. If a trade war were to break out, it would lead to a recession and a slump.

As for the social cost of the Government's programme, the Chancellor says that this first-time-ever boom has led to unparalleled increases in income. But that does not apply to everybody, because 9 million workers receive wages that are lower than the EEC's decency threshold. For the first time in 600 years, shipbuilding is to come to an end on the River Wear, and during the next few months 50,000 jobs are to go in the City of London. Moreover, 3,000 textile jobs have gone in the east midlands, and thousands more in Lancashire and my own west Yorkshire.

The Chancellor had the nerve today to talk about mortgages. The fact is that 8·5 million people are having to pay more now, while the 3 million people whose mortgages are reviewed annually will face a savage increase of up to 25 per cent., in many cases, during the next few weeks. No doubt the notice will be accompanied by a "happy new year" card from the Treasury Bench. House prices are rising four times faster than people's incomes. The building societies admit that there were 23,000 repossessions last year, although there were only 2,500 in 1979. Where will the people who are made homeless go? According to Shelter, there are already 1 million homeless people. Only 29,000 council houses are to be built this year, although as recently as 1975 the figure was 174,000.

The Government talk about the growth of share ownership and democracy, but a survey conducted by *The Times* of the top 1,000 companies showed that the top 25 companies own 37·3 per cent. of the turnover and 53·6 per cent. of the capital assets, that the top 200 companies dispose of 78·1 per cent. of turnover and own 90·9 per cent. of the capital assets and that the top 1,000 companies are owned by 0·1 per cent. of the population. If their families are taken into account, that is less than 1 per cent. of the population. Those are the people whom this Government represent. They are not concerned about the welfare of the great mass of the British people.

When the many poor people who have given up political views face the onslaught, I believe that they will come to realise that politics is important to them and that many middle-class families who are hit by mortgage increases will change their politics and realise that a change of Government is needed. The Government's alternatives are either a demand-led economy or a bureaucratically-dominated economy. I believe in Socialist planning which can be controlled by democratic means. That will bring real benefits to the people of this country.

8.53 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) owns a most useful distorting mirror. He portrays a world in decline and despondency, whereas all about us there is manifold evidence of growth in prosperity, capital investment, and the like. His mirror extends to distorting the statements of Conservative Members. He claimed that at the time of the major slump in world stock markets in 1987 my advice was to increase the public sector borrowing requirement.

I remember clearly the television encounter to which he referred. My advice was that growth should continue and that the Government should continue with their policy of a balanced budget, but that they should make the banking system more liquid to see us through the temporary crisis. I do not regret giving that advice. I think that it was correct. However, it has been distorted by the hazy memory of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East.

More serious is the hon. Gentleman's view of the world when he looks at figures. He told us that public investment is falling and is in a bad way. He did so by ignoring investment in public corporations, which usefully leaves out, for example, the major investment increases in the railway network that were announced recently. His figures relating to total investment are incomprehensible. Perhaps they do not exist.

I, together with several of my hon. Friends, have asked him to make available the figures which he says show that total investment in our economy is lower now than it was during the 1970s. That is almost impossible to believe, but I look forward to the hon. Gentleman providing us with his sources so that they can be compared with the official statistics, which on this occasion I think are more reliable than they are in some other areas.

The Government are right to have taken action over interest rates. I hope that they will continue their downward pressure on the natural growth of public spending. I am delighted to see that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is here. When he prepares the next autumn round of public spending, I hope that he will recognise the need for further increases in health and transport expenditure, which I am sure will be necessary. However, I hope that at the same time he will identify the many areas in which further reductions, or some reductions, can be effected.

With the development of regional growth and the return of prosperity to many towns, the huge regional transfers—called rate support grant—should be re-examined, and some of them reduced. My right hon. Friend should look again at the Scottish programme. Scotland is over-endowed with public spending, relative to its population and its new-found prosperity. He should look again at the interest burden as public sector debt begins to be repaid. That programme could be squeezed quite nicely, making space for other more desirable ends.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will also look at Europe where there has been a singularly large increase for the current year—a 100 per cent. rise forecast for 1989-90 compared with 1988-89. We cannot afford increases of that scale for that type of spending. We need to ensure that it does not happen again.

In order to enjoy the benefits of the large public sector surplus that the Government have engineered, it is also important to guarantee that currency intervention does not get out of hand. It is a sad fact that last year an

[Mr. John Redwood]

excellent £3·6 billion surplus still required the borrowing of some £7 billion from the gilt-edged market to offset the impact of intervention through the foreign exchanges. That was the right decision from the monetary point of view, but I hope that the policy will be simpler to understand this year and that a large public sector surplus will be reflected in a major repayment of gilt-edged securities and public sector debt. That would be something of which the Government could rightly be proud. It is impossible to combine that policy with joining the EMS as a full member, but I should prefer financial prudence and debt repayment to membership of the EMS.

Personal savings have rightly worried many hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. There is a story to be told about the figures, in exactly the same way as my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) dealt admirably with the figures relating to the balance of trade and GNP. The figures, as compiled by the Central Statistical Office, are the result of subtracting consumers' expenditure from personal disposable income. The CSO pointed out in its advice note to editors that these are two very large figures and that a small error in either of them can cause a very large error in the savings ratio, as computed.

The figures in the other personal income category in the second and third quarters show quite a sizeable decline. I do not know whether they represent a realistic assessment of what was happening or whether those figures are subject to revision. Because my right hon. Friend took the right action on interest rates, we shall see, beginning in the fourth quarter of 1988, and much more strongly in the first quarter of 1989, a sharp improvement in the savings ratio, because borrowing is clearly reducing in volume and that will come through in the balance between personal disposable income and consumer expenditure if the figures are to be relied on at all.

Looking forward to the Budget as I do, because the Government are in such a strong position with their surplus, I do not consider that there is any need to make dramatic gestures to reduce income tax. Let us not forget just how strong the position is. If the Government decided to produce what until two years ago would have seemed almost inconceivably prudent—a Budget with no borrowing and no surplus—the standard rate of income tax could be set at around 17p or 18p in the pound. That would be below the current rate and below the target set by the Government to reach a rate of 20p in the pound during this Parliament.

I hope that the Government will take a small step on the way to 20p in the pound in the coming Budget and will continue to run a very tight fiscal policy for the ensuing year. I hope that people will become aware that there is enormous scope and that perhaps in the medium term we should think of a standard rate of income tax not of 20p in the pound but perhaps 15p in the pound which would be ideal to produce incentives and an impact on lower earnings. That will be eminently achievable if the downward pressure on public expenditure is maintained and if the growth rate of the economy remains reasonable despite the higher interest rate.

The important policy is to time the decline in interest rates properly. It is too soon to forecast when it may be possible to lower interest rates again, but there is no need whatsoever to raise them. They can remain at the present level for a while where they will have a great impact on borrowing levels and savings, and in due course it will become apparent when is the right moment to reduce them and people will benefit from the relief on their mortgages.

Finally, I am glad that the Labour Whips have been able to keep a few Opposition Members in the Chamber and find the occasional hon. Member to sit on the Front Bench, but until the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) returned to the Social and Liberal Democrat Bench no one from that party was present throughout most of the debate. When one gets to the point where one is not interested in public spending or taxation, one is tired of politics. The SLD Bench has been empty for most of the time that I have been present in the Chamber.

9.1 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) made a powerful call for Government aid in support of the poor of the Third world. I whole-heartedly endorse and support that and I was glad to hear his speech. However, the Government's economic strategy had done little for the poor in Britain who represent a significant minority—28 per cent. of the population have not participated in the much-vaunted prosperity of our country.

The Chancellor opened the debate in the same spirit of complacent optimism with which he presented the Autumn Statement. His tone was that of the "winner takes all" gamester—the Chancellor as conqueror. Last autumn he presented to the House his White Paper on public expenditure. In the same speech he managed to represent public expenditure as going up, going down and remaining unchanged. Of course each of those positions serves different functions and is geared for different markets. Today it served his interest—as he goes through a rough patch—to emphasise that public expenditure is unchanged. He said that the totals are on target and that the Government are sticking to planning targets. He now suggests that he is an accurate forecaster and that he has got the forecast right.

In order to appease the National Health Service supporters that remain on the Government Benches, the right hon. Gentleman had to assure us last time that health expenditure was going up. Today, no doubt to appease the transport lobby in the Conservative party, he slipped in a reference to the fact that public expenditure on roads is going up. However, he did not point to the downside in public expenditure. He did not highlight the housing cuts, which, taking into account the Government's clawback from receipts on council house sales, mean a cash cut for housing in Britain of £550 million in real terms, when more than 128,000 households in Britain were officially recognised and registered as homeless in 1987. That is in the face of the admission of the Housing Minister on the radio this morning that there are 350 mortgage repossessions a week.

The Chancellor's statement is all things to all people, but it leaves out the homeless. They are not the only exception. There is no hope for the unemployed, either. The Chancellor claims that unemployment fell by 1 million in the past two and a half years, yet the Government's own figures show that only 50,000 full-time jobs were created in that period. That points to the development of a part-time,

temporary, low-wage economy. Earlier this week, we saw two further measures presented to reinforce the establishment of a low-wage economy—the Social Security Bill and the Employment Bill.

Another aspect of public expenditure is the £1 billion reduction in the social security budget. The Chancellor may claim that expenditure is down because of a fall in unemployment and that it has nothing to do with creative accounting and the 28 changes since 1979 in the method of calculating the number of unemployed people. He may claim that it has nothing to do with proposals in recent Bills which will force eligible people out of benefit altogether, to save the Government a further £100 million. He will say that it has nothing to do with the savings that the Government achieved through freezing child benefit for the past two years and from real reductions in savings in respect of other benefits.

There is a myth of steadily rising living standards for everybody, but prosperity in Britain is not shared by all. It is not shared by the homeless or the unemployed. It is not shared by the 9·4 million people—40 per cent. of the work force—in low-paid jobs, earning less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold. It is striking that even those on average wages have not benefited from the Chancellor's economic strategy.

The Government are addicted to computation by averages. They are still trying to peddle the potent myth of the average wage. I sometimes get the impression that Conservative Members believe that the average wage is the national minimum—that everyone is on £254 a week. Many people understand that the majority of people in Britain earn far less than that average. They must live in the real world, on much less. Even those on that average wage pay more in tax now than they did under the last Labour Government.

Recently, a question was put to the Financial Secretary by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). The tables given in reply showed the total tax paid by a single man on average earnings of £254 a week. That total includes income tax, national insurance, and estimates of VAT and domestic rates. I would add that national insurance contributions and domestic rates are not optional; one cannot choose whether to pay them. The single man's total taxes amounted to 45·5 per cent. in 1978-79, and they will be 45·7 per cent. for the current year. For a married couple who are both working, taxes are up from 36·4 to 39·3 per cent. For a married couple with two children, they are up from 35·7 to 37·3 per cent. So much for the myth that the Government peddle of cutting taxes for all. In reality, the tax burden of the people has increased.

For all the Government's reliance on unregulated market forces, the end result of their economic policies is higher taxation for the majority, great tax handouts for the richest, higher mortgages for home buyers, and little or nothing for the poor. The Government's theory of the trickle-down economy is totally discredited. The Chancellor has yet to discover that he cannot go on pretending that the economy is like a Heineken advertisement—that the wealth at the top will filter down to the poorer parts of society. In practice, it is not happening. I am beginning to wonder whether the Chancellor really cares about that.

The right hon. Gentleman's attitude on political economy is beginning to filter through to social attitudes. People seem to believe that our society is based on what we can get away with and what we can get out of it. The dealing room has become the lodestone of morality in our society. Dealing room morality dominates Government policy. In practice, that means a "winner takes all" morality which is typical of the conqueror mentality. A strategy of continuing conquest which will eliminate all opposition, reduce the unemployed to statistical fiction and rub out the poor by redefining them away means that the minority—the losers in our society—will get nothing.

I remind the conquering Chancellor of a remark in a little-known and little-read play by Shakespeare which says:

"This England never did, nor never shall, lie at the proud foot of a conqueror, but when it first did help to wound itself."

9.10 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): First, I should like to address the question of statistics. I shall return to it a little later in relation to the excellent observations of the Select Committee.

The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) raised the question and, had he been here, I would have told him that the figures given by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) are corroborated. For example, on the basis of European Community data given by the Government, averaged out for the period from 1974 to 1979, gross fixed investment as a percentage of GDP was 19·3 per cent. From 1980 to 1984 it was 16·8 per cent. and from 1985 to 1989 it has risen a little to 17·9 per cent. but is lower than it was under the previous Labour Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East, who is always careful about such matters, obtained an independent valuation of the figures from the House of Commons statistical section which effectively confirms the same. I shall not detain the House with the figures in detail, but in 1979 gross domestic fixed capital formation amounted to 18·7 per cent. of GDP. It never achieved that level in the subsequent years under the Conservative Government. In 1987, the last year for which we have definitive figures, it was only 17·1 per cent. Therefore, my hon. Friend's figures were justified.

The Autumn Statement has been a missed opportunity for public expenditure and investment. The public spending figures show that there will be cuts in housing, environment, trade and industry, employment and energy. In real terms, there will be cuts of £400 million in the budgets of the Departments of Trade and Industry and Energy, £300 million in the Department of Employment, £400 million in housing and £100 million in environmental services. One wonders how genuine the Prime Minister's conversion to environmental issues will prove to be. There will be a cut of £200 million in the Scottish budget and a standstill for Wales and Northern Ireland.

That is only the current picture, a snapshot of what is happening now. The cuts are compounded by the neglect in public investment that has occurred under the Government. General Government expenditure has fallen by 40 per cent. in net terms since 1979 and will fall a further 6 per cent. during the next three years. Failure to invest in a public housing programme means that in 1987 almost 130,000 households in Britain—370,000 people—were officially recognised as homeless. That is twice the number declared homeless in 1979, and the figure is getting worse.

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

That is an example which relates to my constituency of Vauxhall, which lies over the river from the House, where the problem of homelessness is shocking.

None of this is new because we have known for a long time that, as opposed to the care to achieve consensus—the hallmark of previous Conservative Administrations ever since Disraeli—this Government have been uncaring in their economic policy ever since they came into office and the most callous and uncaring of any Government since the war. That is not new, but the way in which the Government have been trying to run their economic policy since 1986 is. We know that they have failed to sustain their original targets and instruments for managing the economy. I well remember that when the Chancellor's predecessor took office in 1979 he said:

"It is crucially important to re-establish sound money. We intend to achieve this through firm monetary discipline and fiscal policies consistent with that, including strict control over public expenditure."

In a statement to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee he said:

"Any suggestion of a reversal would take us into horrendous areas of outer space so to speak."

I welcome the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Chancellor to outer space, because in effect that is where they are in terms of their overall management of the economy.

The Government tried for a while to adjust the figures to the facts. During an earlier phase, the Chancellor—Lawson mark 1—shuffled his monetary targets and adjusted the figures so often that had he been playing cards he would have been thrown out of any self-respecting casino. He shrank his targets from the broader M3 to the much narrow M0 in a way that did not convince anybody outside the House, certainly not in the square mile of the City of London.

By the autumn of 1986, the Chancellor had reverted to demand expansion with a pre-election mini-boom, and from his spring Budget of 1987 onwards he has confirmed that by reducing the basic tax rate. The irony is that the Chancellor is supposed to be economically literate. I am sorry that he is not present because for some reason during the debate he chose to claim that Labour Members were economically illiterate. I taught economics for at least 10 years and had many a better economics undergraduate student than him. He wrote about economics as a journalist, but it does not seem to have done him much good.

Even the Chancellor should know that what he has been engaged on since 1986 is not monetary policy, despite all the talk of sound financial discipline. In practice, although he dare not say its name, the post-1986 boom has been a demand-led classic boom. Such a boom was derided by Conservative Members for many years as a Keynesian boom. In an article next week, Professor Meghnad Desai of the London School of Economics reflects on the irony that since the autumn of 1986 the Government have run an economic policy that closely followed what the shadow Cabinet was proposing, but with a difference, because in practice, for all the rhetoric of the supply side of the economy, they have not intervened in supply and ensured the most basic equivalence of a supply response to match demand response. The result is a horrendous balance of payments deficit.

It is not surprising that the Chancellor should not be advertising these facts. Hilaire Belloc could have warned him

"And always keep a hold of Nurse
For fear of finding something worse."

In this case, nurse does not like John Maynard Keynes, just as she does not like the international variants pursued by the Chancellor either in the form of managed floating of currencies or in his penchant to get everything over with by joining the European monetary system. Again, the irony is not merely that the Chancellor is a closet Keynesian; he is an incompetent Keynesian. It is one thing not to read John Maynard Keynes and to dismiss him, as I assume is the case for the Prime Minister, but if the Chancellor claims to be economically literate, he should have been able to do better than he has.

He should also have been concerned about the congratulations he received from the Tory press until May last year, because there is one certain statistical correlation. Every time the Tory press congratulates a Chancellor of the Exchequer—since Reginald Maudling in the 1950s—it has seen only the upswing in the cycle and has been taken for a ride. In every case, the result has been a massive balance of payments deficit. The trade deficit for 1988 is the worst in recorded history.

The situation is highlighted by considering the non-oil visible imbalance, which in 1987 was nearly £15 billion. For 1988, it may be up to £20 billion. That reflects, of course, structural factors in the economy that the Government simply have not addressed, although other nations have addressed them by pursuing an industrial strategy. The Chancellor should, once he abandoned the medium-term financial strategy, have realised the real implications of the supply side and should have concerned himself with encouraging Ministers and the Department of Trade and Industry and even, if there is still something called collective responsibility in the Cabinet, with seeking to persuade the Prime Minister that when every other country plans its investment and its medium-term trade strategy—whether European economies or Japan, with the only exception being the United States, which is hardly an example to us all with its trade deficit—this country too should be intervening on the supply side and should be planning.

Another of the Chancellor's problems is that he has stripped the policy armoury of the main Keynesian instruments. He may want to join the European monetary system and obtain gains in stability, but he is not ready to appear to adopt a policy of devaluation. That is ironic because in the 1960s, which I remember because I was in the Cabinet Office, the pressure on the pound was such that civil servants and Peter Jay, who virtually got himself sacked from the Treasury for it, scarcely dared to mention, not a four-letter word, but the word "devaluation". We understand that a similar policy is being pursued now inside the Treasury.

The message going round is that devaluation will not be referred to. I wonder why. It cannot be for trade reasons. We cannot assume that the Government have been so persuaded by some of the arguments on the multinational structure of trade that they too now have reservations about devaluation. It does not seem to be that. The reason is that the situation is so precarious at the moment, as the Chancellor and the Government know, that they simply will not allow the word to be used.

I know of the devices adopted by people in the 1960s. I remember people talking about the real need for a double dose, although it was not specified what that was. In the 1960s, some Government economic advisers had an advantage over Terry Burns. Lords Kaldor and Balogh, as they later became, simply picked up the telephone and talked about the matter in Hungarian. Terry Burns no doubt worked out his own devices for trying to discuss devaluation without doing a cloak-and-dagger act in St. James's park.

Why are the Government so concerned to avoid a discussion about the exchange rate? The reason why the pound is relatively strong today is that it is buoyed up by interest rates that are higher than any of those of our leading competitors, and also because the dollar is relatively strong. As the dollar weakens, the pressure on the pound will become considerable. The Chancellor is standing by because he knows that he may well be forced by world pressures into the realignment of the pound.

Sir Peter Hordern: The hon. Gentleman said that the balance of payments deficit is at a record level. In nominal terms—in terms of figures—he is right, but the proportion of GDP accounted for by the balance of payments deficit is still not approaching what it was under the two previous Labour Governments, and the hon. Gentleman does not take into account the enormous public sector deficit that occurred under previous Labour Governments, which forced them to appeal to the International Monetary Fund for rescue. That is the difference between the present situation and the one for which the hon. Gentleman and his party were responsible.

Mr. Holland: The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) has missed the fact that there is another difference. In the 1970s, sterling was a key reserve currency. We had a relatively fixed exchange rate system but the devaluation of the dollar in 1971 put tremendous pressure on the pound. I am not saying that I would have acted in precisely the same way as some of my former colleagues, but the pressure was exceptional. Furthermore, this Government have never had to face anything equivalent to the increases in oil prices that occurred in September 1973. Every OECD Government slowed down the international economy at that time, and with horrendous consequences. Instead of adjusting the steering or changing down, most of them slammed on the brakes.

The hon. Member for Horsham, knows—perhaps even the Chancellor knows—that one country's imports are another country's exports, and that the result was the contraction of mutual OECD trade. This Government have not had to face such problems. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should know by now that I am quite happy to take them on, but if they wish to intervene, why do they not get to their feet?

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why, if the Labour Government alone among Governments of industrial countries got their economic policy right between 1973 and 1976, they were the only Government who had to call in the IMF?

Mr. Holland: I did not claim that; I wish the hon. Gentleman would listen to what I am saying. Sterling was, and still is, a key reserve currency and the pressure placed on the pound by the devaluation of the dollar in 1971 was exceptional.

The Chancellor will not touch any controls other than that represented by interest rate policy. The Opposition cannot see how that will be effective in sustaining recovery in the economy as a whole. One thing is quite clear, and that is that the self-financing of big business means that it will not be as deeply affected by higher interest rate charges as small firms will be. The interest rate increases will not be the euthenasia of the rentier but they will wipe out many small and medium-sized firms, as Conservative Members well know.

The Chancellor appears to need no persuading that there is an economic miracle. The shine may have slipped off his smile somewhat, but it beggars the imagination to claim that there is an economic miracle when we have a most horrendous balance of payments problem and when there is a structural crisis in the long-term manufacturing trade performance of this country.

Mr. Brazier: If there is such a structural crisis in our manufacturing performance, why has it improved so quickly in the past 12 months?

Mr. Holland: The balance of payments crisis is a very long-term problem. It certainly goes back to the 1970s, but it is very little affected by macroeconomic policies and demand management. We simply have not invested enough. Certainly in the decade during which the Government have been in power there has not been sufficient long-term, technology-embodying investment to improve our competitiveness vis-a-vis other countries in Europe and vis-a-vis Japan. The hon. Gentleman should know that. The so-called recovery of manufacturing investment lauded by Conservative Members is simply a recovery from the depths to which the Government had allowed the economy to sink by 1981. We are still hardly back to the manufacturing output level that we had reached in 1979.

Of course, the Chancellor is not confident of sustaining his miracle. He might be praying for his miracle. I am not sure of his fiscal stance on this. It appears that his fiscal stance—with interest rates where they are—is horizontal rather than vertical, but there is certainly a problem for the Chancellor. Let us be sympathetic. The statistics which we have are a problem for the Chancellor. That was put brilliantly by Bill Martin, the adviser to the Select Committee, in the following words:

"the junk-data which these days pass for official statistics make it impossible to get anything but the most tenuous appreciation of recent economic behaviour, let alone predict its future course. Consequently, forecasters who have been collectively burnt to a crisp by economic developments this year are still in no position to write a happy ending to Britain's overheating saga."

Further on in his memorandum to the report, he says:

"Worse still, the holes in the official statistics have left forecasters with only the foggiest appreciation of why the economy accelerated."

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman appears to be getting into trouble despite his long years of experience as a lecturer. The reality is that the balance of probability is that any variables in the system will be in favour of a reduction in the outturn of the balance of payments deficit this year. Even last weekend it was pointed out that there is probably an under-recording of £4 billion on invisible exports. That puts his argument completely in threads.

Mr. Holland: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has brought me precisely to that point. He has helped me a great deal. One thing which is wrong with our foreign trade statistics is that we measure imports accurately, because there are duties liable on them, but the recording of exports is voluntary. There is no mandatory obligation to report figures or any penalty for not reporting them accurately. Further, the Government have no idea what is happening with the transfer pricing by the big businesses which dominate our trade.

When we were in government, we published the figures, for example, on the share of trade commanded by big business from 1971 onwards. When I came into the House in 1979, I asked the Government to continue to give that information. It shows, for example, that some 30 firms command 40 per cent. of our visible export trade, 75 firms half and 220 firms two thirds. What those companies do crucially affects our trade performance, but all those companies are multinationals and all are integrated in world markets. We saw an example in the *Evening Standard* today. There was a report that Ford will or will not decide to produce just one vehicle at Dagenham. Whatever is done to the exchange rate will not affect Ford's decision on that Dagenham location.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Holland: No. I have given way enough.

If the Government do not introduce some transparency not only on figures concerning expenditure and output, but on the structure of supply, in future, as now, they will simply be groping in the dark with their economic policy.

Mr. Redwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Holland: No. I shall not give way any more. If I give way, it will be at the expense of the Chief Secretary.

It is double standards for the Chancellor to claim, on the one hand, that his high interest rate measures are well targeted on the south-east, because that is the area where house prices are out of line, yet, on the other, that there will be nothing wrong with the RPI if it does not include mortgage costs. To do that lays him open to the charge that the country's core rate of inflation should exclude the country's property-owning democracy.

The report from the RPI advisory committee on issues affecting the retail price code said:

"These represent tangible expenditures which most owner-occupier households need to make at some time. The households concerned think of mortgage payments as an integral part of their regular expenditure."

In a survey which that committee carried out, 80 per cent. of those consulted said that they felt that mortgage interest rates should be included as part of the RPI.

The Chancellor also knows that if he does not achieve an industrial strategy, we shall see further de-industrialisation of the economy in coming years. He may not agree, for example, with unilateral nuclear disarmament, but he should not accept for GEC and other takeovers unilateral industrial disarmament. The Government must take steps which ensure that we have a sounder economic structure on the supply side of the economy, and that can be done only by intervention, negotiation and the type of consensus on both sides of industry which the Government do not wish to achieve.

If the Chancellor cannot address the issues of an alternative industrial strategy, he may shortly be looking at his employment. Perhaps the City can afford him, but the country cannot.

9.35 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury(Mr. John Major): We have had a wide-ranging and occasionally baffling debate in which several hon. Members, particularly those on the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee whose report has so well informed this debate, have made excellent and interesting contributions.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who ably chairs that lively assembly that I occasionally have the pleasure of appearing before, raised, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Slough, (Mr. Watts), the question of official statistics. My right hon. Friend reiterated strongly the Committee's worries about the current state of economic statistics. The Government share that anxiety, which is why last year my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set up a review to examine the present arrangements for producing them and to make recommendations for improving them. That scrutiny has been completed and the Government are now considering it. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor intimated earlier, we shall in due course publish a comprehensive report as a result of that inquiry.

In the closing remarks of his teach-in, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) was pessimistic about our prospects and painted a picture which I suspect few would recognise. In his analysis of the economy it seemed that he missed some of the ingredients that many other less learned people might conceivably think important. He omitted the fact that capital investment is growing at more than twice the rate of consumption, that private investment is at its highest level since records began—he expressly stated the contrary—that manufacturing output is at its highest ever level and growing fast, and that non-oil company profitability rose by about 10 per cent. in 1987—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) should wait a minute as he will hear something that will interest him. Non-oil company profitability is expected to be higher in 1988 than at any time since 1960. It may be that the hon. Member for Vauxhall thought that unimportant and he is not alone in that, for the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) also failed to mention many of those facts.

Mr. Holland: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: In one moment. Neither did either hon. Member mention that unemployment has now fallen for 28 successive months. Perhaps that is because in 1986 the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said:

"there would be no fall in unemployment",

and the hon. Member for Vauxhall only last March said:

"The reality is that unemployment will get worse."

It is now two years since the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East made his prediction and 10 months since the hon. Member for Vauxhall made his. In that time, unemployment has fallen in every month and in every region.

Mr. Holland: First, one point is missing from the catalogue given to us by the Chief Secretary and that is that the balance of trade is an imbalance. Secondly, what matters is not the profits that companies have in their

pockets, but how they invest them and how competitive we are. Our productivity recovery is nothing compared with the higher levels of other countries. Thirdly, if the Government had not changed the unemployment figures 23 times, we would be more persuaded. The Chief Secretary should learn that real jobs cannot be stimulated by massaging the figures.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman intends to talk about catalogues, I shall deal with the catalogues of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East in a few moments.

Both hon. Gentlemen, and the Labour party generally, still predict gloom with avid glee. That is the central part of everything that Labour Members say. The Labour party has been predicting a slump for a considerable number of years, although it stubbornly refuses to appear. With characteristic inhibition, the Leader of the Opposition, who is temporarily absent, predicted in 1983 a super-slump and forecast that the Government's promise of a recovery was "a mirage." The only mirage was the right hon. Gentleman's forecast of a super-slump. Since then, we have had steady growth and we are entering our seventh successive year of it.

Both the hon. Gentlemen and others raised matters to which I shall turn in a few moments, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor promised earlier that I would deal with the public expenditure aspects of the Autumn Statement to which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) devoted a considerable amount of time. The House will of course have a further opportunity to discuss the spending plans in detail next month.

The most important part of the public expenditure survey to note is the fact that we have been able to hold spending for next year unchanged at the total of £167 billion. That means that we have been able to meet two separate but important objectives. The first has been to reduce overall spending as a proportion of national income, so that we can maintain a strong fiscal position and, when it is prudent to do so, reduce taxes as well, because Conservative Members believe in lower taxes.

Over the past four years, public spending has fallen, from over 46 per cent. of national income——

Mr. Leighton: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Vauxhall took a considerable amount of the limited time available and, if the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) will excuse me, I shall not give way.

Over the past four years public spending has fallen from over 46 per cent. of national income to less than 40 per cent. It is set to fall further to the lowest level since 1966 by 1991.

For the future, our plans provide for spending on programmes to grow by an average 3 per cent. in real terms over the survey period. But the reduction in the burden of debt interest means that total spending is set to grow by less than 2 per cent. a year on average in real terms. That means that we shall continue to have firm control of total public spending as well as real growth in priority services. In the total for next year, we have achieved substantial savings through the rapid fall in unemployment, which cut spending on social security benefits by £1·5 billion a year, the success of the right-to-buy scheme, which has been tremendous, and far better performance by nationalised industries. Those are the direct results of the success of specific policies and together they provide substantial savings that we can redeploy to priority services.

Those savings, together with a rigorous reassessment of priorities that we made in the public expenditure round, have meant that we are now spending money where we choose to spend it and not where circumstances dictate. That is the second objective that we have met, and it is very welcome. Let me illustrate why it is so welcome. It has made possible an unprecedented increase in resources for the National Health Service of over £2 billion next year and over £2·5 billion the year after. That will offer real service growth, as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, even with his perverted statistics, must know. It has enabled substantial increases for roads, the police services and the development of a modern prison system.

The science budget, mentioned by a number of hon. Members, will be over 16 per cent. higher next year. There is substantial extra investment for the water authorities to reduce both sea and river pollution, as was mentioned in the debate. In direct response to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, I should point out that extra investment by British Rail and London Transport will improve safety and services for passengers.

All in all, the increase in total capital spending for next year is about £2·25 billion. I cannot recall, and neither can any other hon. Members, when there was last such an increase in capital public spending in a single year. We should compare that with Labour's record on public sector capital investment. Total public sector capital investment under Labour fell by 12 per cent. in real terms. What did that mean for the services about which they claim to care? National Health Service capital spending went down by 30 per cent. in real terms. We have increased it by 40 per cent. Spending on roads fell by 40 per cent. in real terms and we have increased it by 30 per cent. We need and will accept no lectures from Opposition Members about proper capital spending and public services.

As a result of sound management, public finances are in better shape now than for a generation. For the past two years we have managed to reduce taxes, increase spending in key areas and repay the national debt on an unprecedented scale.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) regarded the fiscal surplus as a great achievement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, and I agree with him. Over the past two years my right hon. Friend will have secured a net repayment equivalent to 8 per cent. of the total outstanding stock of Government debt. That means that we are the first tax-paying generation for more than 50 years to stop the growth of debt and to start repaying it, so relieving the burden that future generations would otherwise have to face.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was his usual self this afternoon—lucid, forceful, agressive and a purveyor of more doubtful material than Arthur Daley. The hon. Gentleman has a way with facts that I have rarely seen equalled and he should spend tomorrow having a painful interview with his research assistant who presumably provided them.

The hon. Gentleman wriggled like a fish on a hook when challenged by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to set out his policies on taxation and public expenditure. He repeatedly failed to give them. He left the impression with me, and I suspect with most hon. Members, that he did not respond because he had no ideas what those

[Mr. Major]

policies were. It would be tiresome and time-consuming to correct all the hon. Gentleman's fanciful howlers, but I will deal with some of them.

The hon. Gentleman said that inflation was at the European average when the Labour party left office. He is wrong. In May 1979 the European Community average was 8·8 per cent. and United Kingdom inflation was 10·3 per cent. He also said that inflation was on a declining trend, but it was not. It was on a sharply rising trend. In January 1979 it was 9·3 per cent., in February 9·6 per cent., in March 9·8 per cent., in April 10·1 per cent. and in May 10·3 per cent. Even the hon. Gentleman cannot say that there was a declining trend when the Labour party left office.

The hon. Gentleman also said that overall investment as a share of GDP was never lower than it is now. He is wrong again. I gloss over the fact that the figures for the current year, which has been a dramatic investment boom, are not yet available, so the hon. Gentleman cannot know the position. Even on the figures that are available, I suspect that he is wrong.

The hon. Member was also pressed to reveal his fiscal strategy and he gave a remarkable answer. He announced that he would—at one and the same time—reduce inflation, allow interest rates to fall and reduce the balance of payments deficit. In other words, he would loosen monetary policy, expand fiscal policy and expect to reduce inflation. That is an interesting trick if he can do it, but he would have to defy most of the known laws of economics to achieve it. It that is the best that the hon. Gentleman can do, I understand entirely why he failed to answer the direct questions that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor asked him.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East also told us that he would increase spending on training, the environment, science, the regions and technology. He did not explain how increasing that spending would help to reduce inflation. What the hon. Gentleman effectively proposed was fiscal laxity—not a fiscal strategy That is precisely what we expect from Labour spokesmen, because that is what we get from Labour Governments when we are unfortunate enough to have them.

We did learn something about the Opposition tax strategy, and very interesting it was too. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that it was unfair to tax any form of saving and he specifically instanced building society investments. I assume therefore—I will give way to him if he wants to respond—that he would abolish the composite rate of tax, at a cost of around £3 billion in the short term and far more in the long term as people switch from shares into deposits. That is what the hon. Gentleman said and implied.

Some time ago, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), whom we all look forward to welcoming back, said that he was careful about making pledges, because the Conservatives added up their costs. I may tell the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that that is exactly what I shall do, because the Opposition are racking up the cost of their programme again and again. We shall keep a very close check on what they say.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East dismissed a reminder that the man on average earnings is £45 per week better off now than when the last Labour Government left office. He implied that living standards automatically rise. I remind him that under the last Labour Government, real take-home pay fell by more than £1 a week for a married man on average earnings. That is the record of shame which must be compared with the increase of £45 per week that has taken place as a result of the present Government's policies.

The hon. Gentleman implied that the period at the end of the last Labour Government was a golden age, so I looked it up. To be strictly fair to the hon. Gentleman, I picked precisely today's date 10 years ago. I also picked the only newspaper that happened not to be on strike that day. I shall read the headlines to the hon. Gentleman. Under the headline "Regional 'trouble shooters'", it reports:

"The Prime Minister held back from declaring a full State of Emergency last night. . . Instead, the Government is setting up regional emergency committees."

Is that the hon. Gentleman's idea of regional policy? It continues:

"Apparently, they will not have the power themselves to order the use of troops."

That power at least stayed with the Government.

Other headlines include:

"Grocers may close as stocks dwindle."

and:

"Walk-out hits water supplies."

That report continues:

"Water supplies and sewerage services covering 750,000 people in central Lancashire will be hit by an unofficial strike."

On that same day 10 years ago, in that golden age, an emergency was declared in Ulster, and British Airways pilots were on strike.

However, those were not the main headlines. Those were the secondary stories. The main headline was:

"Nation on precipice, says Healey. Union spurns Cabinet plea. Lorry strike made official: food stocks 'will run out'."

That is the record of the golden age to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Those were the policies he advocated again today, however he described them. That would be the result of those policies, and that is why the country will have nothing to do with them.

Mr. Holland: Which newspaper was that?

Mr. Major: It was *The Daily Telegraph*, which was the only newspaper not on strike that day, so good were the activities of the Labour party. Those were the headlines of 10 years ago.

Many right hon. and hon. Members concentrated their remarks on their concern about inflation. I can understand why, and I reiterate the Government's well-known view that the reduction of inflation is the priority to which our policy must be directed, and that it will continue to be directed at that priority in the future. The Opposition's apparent policy of lower interest rates, lower exchange rates, more public spending and more public borrowing is a lethal concoction which is bound to lead yet again to spiralling inflation.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the economy's outstanding success over recent years, with growth of more than 3 per cent. per year in each of the last four years, investment rising faster than for years—and faster than consumption in six years out of the last seven. Both company profits and productivity have reached their highest levels since the 1960s.

Nor is there any doubt that supply-side reforms and the knock-on effect of the present investment boom will improve capacity and profitability in future. At present we

face the particular problem of excess demand. That must and will be overcome with a strong fiscal position and a strong monetary policy to ensure that we do not jeopardise what has been achieved and our prospects for the future.

But Labour Members seem not to understand what our policy is achieving. For some years our policy has been to seek a progressive reduction in inflation together with steady and sustainable growth, and we are achieving that with the right mix of monetary and fiscal policy.

Our present fiscal position is extremely strong—a large budget surplus and no increase in planned public expenditure. Therefore, the right method to deal with excess demand is short-term interest rates. The right, most appropriate and most effective method is short-term interest rates. I have no doubt that they will work on this occasion as they have done in the past.

In the odd world in which he lives, the hon. Member for Vauxhall may not have noticed that there is an investment boom this year and every projection shows that it will continue next year.

Mr. Holland: What about small business?

Mr. Major: Every week 1,000 new firms are being registered net of those that close down. When did that happen under the previous Labour Government?

There are already signs that house price rises are being curbed, that the demand for mortgages is falling and that consumer spending is slowing down. That is what we seek and that is what we need to see in the next few months.

Despite out lack of success when pressing the Opposition earlier, we now have some clues to some of the hidden policies that they have but choose not to talk about. For example, we know that they wish to reverse higher tax cuts, because they frequently tell us so. We know that they wish to increase basic rate taxes, because they regularly vote against reductions and pledge themselves to expenditure that would raise taxes. We know that they have traditionally been proud—boastful even—to be the high-tax, high-spending, high-borrowing and high-inflation party.

Inflation during our period of office has never approached half of the average it was under the Labour Government.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman has already taken up far too much of the time of the House.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Major: We know too that the Opposition want credit controls because they tell us so frequently. But that is all we know, because beyond that one needs second sight to divine their policies. What policies they do have are concealed with misleading language.

Conviction has been replaced by camouflage in the Labour party's vocabulary. Nationalisation is out. That has now become social ownership, courtesy of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Devaluation is out. That is now called seeking a realistic exchange rate, courtesy, I think, of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Government intervention and regulation is now out in the Labour party. That is now called supply-side Socialism, courtesy of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East.

The Labour party is in hock to yesterday's ideas. They have different packages, but they have exactly the same poison in them that they always had.

The concept of supply-side Socialism is breathtaking plagiarism; another piece of yuppy camouflage by the hon. Gentlemen. It is about as realistic as horse-drawn hang gliding. The idea was first mooted by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, but no one has since come forward to claim credit for it. Frankly, I am not surprised, because higher taxes, more taxes and credit controls are an odd policy to encourage the supply-side. I will tell hon. Members what it is. It is a supply of Socialism, not a supply-side policy. It is also a gimmick, an idea, a jumble of words which do not add up to anything.

The Opposition claim that they want to help the poor, but they have no policy for inflation. They want to help the low paid, but they vote against tax reductions. They hope that they will get power without policy, but they will not, because people understand the improvements in Britain. They know that the economy has been transformed and they want to keep it that way. That is why they will support the need for policies to achieve growth without inflation. The Autumn Statement is central to that and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 276.

Division No. 32] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Coleman, Donald
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Allen, Graham	Corbett, Robin
Alton, David	Corbyn, Jeremy
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cousins, Jim
Armstrong, Hilary	Crowther, Stan
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Cryer, Bob
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Cummings, John
Ashton, Joe	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Cunningham, Dr John
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Dalyell, Tam
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Darling, Alistair
Barron, Kevin	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Battle, John	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Beckett, Margaret	Dewar, Donald
Beith, A. J.	Dixon, Don
Bell, Stuart	Dobson, Frank
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Doran, Frank
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Bermingham, Gerald	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Bidwell, Sydney	Eastham, Ken
Blair, Tony	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Blunkett, David	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Boateng, Paul	Fatchett, Derek
Boyes, Roland	Faulds, Andrew
Bradley, Keith	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Fisher, Mark
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Flannery, Martin
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Flynn, Paul
Buchan, Norman	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Buckley, George J.	Foster, Derek
Caborn, Richard	Foulkes, George
Callaghan, Jim	Fraser, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Fyfe, Maria
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Galloway, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Canavan, Dennis	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Cartwright, John	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Gordon, Mildred
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Gould, Bryan
Clay, Bob	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Clelland, David	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Cohen, Harry	Hardy, Peter

Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maude, Hon Francis
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 1st November 1988; endorses the action taken by Her Majesty's Government to ensure that inflation resumes its downward trend; welcomes the prospect of continued growth and strong investment as the basis for maintaining the trend of rising employment; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the continuing reduction in the share of national income pre-empted by public expenditure.

Prostitution (Streatham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.15 pm

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): Prostitution is an unpleasant matter to raise in the House. It is even more unpleasant for my constituents. Over the past few years, a plague—a pollution—has struck a part of my constituency. Certain streets have become red light areas. At night, they swarm with prostitutes. I accept that that is not unique to Streatham, although it is unique to the residents there.

I read the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) during the proceedings on the Criminal Justice Bill on 20 June. She mentioned similar problems that her constituents face. I felt deep sympathy for her, and especially for her constituents. Unless one lives in the area, one cannot appreciate local residents' acute distress caused by such a plague. I ask the House to imagine what it is like every evening for one who lives there. A local resident said:

> "The noise is endless as the cars screech round the roads, viewing the prostitutes as they stand on the corners. The noise of the prostitutes screaming among themselves or at their clients. The pimps and their cars; the harassment of residents as they walk down their own streets."

Then, every morning, residents must take a broom to sweep away condoms from behind garages.

The residents have mentioned cars on the roads. Last June, local inhabitants took a traffic count. On one quiet evening in one quiet residential avenue which I know well, during the rush hour, between 5 and 6 in the evening, 36 cars passed down that avenue. Between 10 and 11 that night, 127 cars passed down that avenue.

What is being done? Since April of last year, the local police have formed a vice squad. It has a sergeant and three officers. They do not have their own van at their disposal. They must call for the station van if they wish to arrest a prostitute. Nevertheless, in 1987, 239 prostitutes were arrested and prosecuted; and in 1988, 803 prostitutes were arrested and prosecuted, and 180 kerb crawlers were arrested and prosecuted.

The police send letters to the homes of those kerb crawlers whose car numbers have been taken by residents. The letter asks the reason why the car was there and who was driving it. I take this opportunity to warn all kerb crawlers that if they come to Streatham they may well be arrested and prosecuted. They may well find on their breakfast table a letter from the police asking why their car was being driven around on a certain night. What is more, at least some of the girls have been diagnosed as having AIDS, and a greater number have been diagnosed as having highly infectious hepatitis B. I say to all kerb crawlers, "Do not come to Streatham." Despite all this, the situation has not improved, so more must be done.

First, I have nothing but praise for the local police. They are doing an excellent job with the resources at their disposal. As I said, they have a vice squad of four. Tooting, which was a similar red light area in Wandsworth, up Balham hill, has a vice squad of eight—two sergeants and six policemen—with its own van. I understand that it is a matter of manpower allocation formula and that Tooting and Streatham come under different police areas. This is not a matter for the Government but for the police, but surely we should have similar strength in Streatham as in

[Sir William Shelton]

Tooting, where the problem has abated, perhaps due to the police. When the police in Tooting are not over-stretched, could they not co-operate across the borders so that the Tooting police could help the Streatham police?

Secondly, the maximum fine for the conviction of a prostitute is £100 but the average fine imposed last year was about £35. The police tell me that, within 90 minutes of the prostitute being taken to the police station she is out on bail and back on the street. Many of them make £400 or £500 a night. I wish that the magistrates who impose those fines understood the breakdown in law and order that those people cause in the community. There is nothing romantic about prostitutes and what they do to the lives of the residents of the areas they inhabit.

Maximum fines should be increased, if only to encourage magistrates to impose more realistic fines. I suspect that the £100 fine has remained unchanged for many years, and surely it should be increased. The argument that, if the fine were increased, it would drive the girls to ply their trade harder must be invalid. It it were true, it would apply to any thief or fraudster; one would say that they should not be fined harshly, because they would commit the same crime again. If the prostitutes are back on the job again after 90 minutes, they could not work harder anyway.

The maximum fine for a kerb crawler is £400, but the 108 who were convicted were fined an average of £100. I should like to see stiffer fines for kerb crawlers. Might it be possible to see whether those convicted of kerb crawling could be banned from driving for three months? There is no doubt that kerb crawling is a driving offence. Such people drive slowly, stopping and starting, and sounding their horns, and they do not pay attention to the road.

Thirdly, the police tell me that they can do little about prosecuting pimps with much hope of conviction because they have to prove that they are living off immoral earnings. It is not difficult to prove that a madam or a pimp is running a brothel. However, if they are minding —God help us—two or three girls on the street, it is well nigh impossible to prove. Even if the police see a girl handing money to that wretched person and they are both arrested, they will say that the pimp is the woman's banker and is merely holding the money for her until the next day. The law should be looked at.

Perhaps it might be possible to swing the balance of proof on to the man, to make him show that he came by the money honestly and that it is not from immoral earnings. I also wonder whether the Inland Revenue might look more closely at those people. They are well known to the police but cannot be convicted.

Fourthly, the Sexual Offences Act 1985 introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) is an excellent Act. The problem is that, under it, a kerb crawler commits an offence only if he solicits a woman persistently. If he is kerb crawling to pick up a prostitute, he will not have to solicit persistently. Therefore, that part of the Act is invalid and I am not sure whether any kerb crawler has been prosecuted successfully under it. I understand that no one has been in Streatham.

The reason why 108 kerb crawlers were prosecuted last year in Streatham is that the police used the second part of the Act, which says that a kerb crawler also commits an offence if he causes annoyance to other persons in the neighbourhood. That means that the unfortunate residents must sit behind their windows with a pencil and paper noting car number plates, and report them to the police, who then stop the car after it has been round a few times and charge the man. Surely that is not what an honest citizen should have to do to help the police to secure a conviction.

I hope that at some time in the not too distant future, advantage will be taken of a Criminal Justice Bill to modify the wording of the Act, so that kerb crawlers can be successfully prosecuted because they are soliciting, rather than because they are a nuisance to the neighbourhood. This must impose such a burden on the residents. My hon. Friend the Member for Drake told me that she did not want to include the word "persistently" but was obliged to do so in Committee, or the Bill might have fallen.

Fifthly, a good traffic management scheme is vital to control kerb crawlers. In the 1987 election, the then leader of Lambeth council descended on the area and pledged such a scheme for the residents. Some lighting has been put up, but the traffic management scheme has not been implemented. I urge Lambeth council and the residents to move as quickly as possible to implement it. I understand that at last the money will be available after April, and I hope that it is quickly put to use.

Finally, the power to send prostitutes to gaol was removed in 1982. Many people believe that that opened the floodgates to soliciting, but I should be reluctant for us to return to sending prostitutes to prison. We all feel that too many people are sent to gaol, but if the Home Office introduces electronic tagging, surely it would be a suitable option for persistent offenders. It would serve as a curfew and keep prostitutes indoors from dusk to dawn. That would be a good solution to the problem.

We must remove the burden of this problem from my constituents and those in other parts of the country. It is a great burden, which is why I have brought the subject before the House in this Adjournment debate.

10.29 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It is good to have the chance to reply to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) so soon after the honour paid to him, on which the whole House congratulates him. I must also congratulate him on the persistent and assiduous way in which he has represented his constituents in trying to deal with this problem, which must be the most appalling nuisance to those of his constituents who live in the affected areas.

Undoubtedly, no one could have done more than my hon. Friend in recent months to try to ensure that the lessons from other parts of the country that may be of use in Streatham are applied there, and no one could have put more pressure on the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and myself to seek improvements on behalf of his constituents. He has made a highly constructive speech with a list of positive suggestions; in an Adjournment speech, one does not always hear such a constructive list of suggestions to which to reply.

Prostitutes plying for trade and clients looking for them undoubtedly create a serious nuisance for local residents; my hon. Friend and I agree wholly on that point. I also agree that local residents should not be expected to

tolerate it. For some time, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have been trying to find ways to alleviate this most difficult problem. Prostitution will always be with us, and it is an exceptionally difficult issue with which to deal. It is often a matter of controlling it rather than eradicating it, as I am sure my hon. Friend recognises.

That is not to say that individual residents or the residents of whole streets in my hon. Friend's constituency or the constituency of our hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks), whose speech we listened to in the dying moments of the Report stage of the Criminal Justice Bill last summer, should have to put up with the problem. We must consider what the Government can do and what the police can do, in co-operation with the local community.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On the question of control, will my hon. Friend the Minister give his observations on what my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) said about several prostitutes who are suffering from AIDS or HIV infection and plying their trade in Streatham? That represents a serious risk. What is the Government's view on that? Is there anything that my hon. Friend thinks can be done?

Mr. Patten: That is a matter to which my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham has drawn my attention, and I shall, of course, be drawing it to the attention of those responsible at the Department of Health. If my hon. Friend is implying that the Government should seek, as a matter of policy, to make plying for trade as a prostitute, for example, a criminal offence to a greater degree if the prostitute has AIDS, hepatitis B, gonorrhoea or syphilis, that is an appealing argument, but it raises a difficult question: there is a substantial danger of driving those with such diseases underground and out of the ambit of those who can bring them help.

The advice that we receive from the chief medical officer and others is that one should seek to identify those who have these conditions and try to obtain for them the medical help that they need. However, the matter is of deep concern and we keep it under review. I am not trying, as a Minister, to get out of giving a straight answer by saying "we shall keep it under review". We are reviewing what should be done all the time. That has dealt with one of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham in his litany of constructive suggestions.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the level of manpower devoted to prostitution in the Streatham division; his figures are almost identical to mine. I am advised that there is now a dedicated team of one sergeant and four constables to combat prostitution, but that may change from week to week and month to month. I was not aware of the point that was raised about the van, but I know that the Commissioner recognises the seriousness of the problem in Streatham. As the House knows, the deployment of police manpower is a matter for the Commissioner, and no doubt he will take close account of what my hon. Friend has said tonight, because *Hansard's* report of his speech will be drawn to his attention.

I can certainly confirm that the figures that my hon. Friend gave for arrests and prosecutions for prostitution in the Streatham division are wholly accurate. It is worth while repeating them because they show that a measure of progress has been made in the past calendar year or so. Although the problem is still severe from the point of view of my hon. Friend's constituents, the police are beginning to have some effect with their targeting strategy. Targeting is very important, and I was delighted that my hon. Friend chose to pay a warm tribute to the local police.

The number of arrests for prostitution in the Streatham division increased from 239 in 1987 to 803 in 1988 and the number of kerb crawlers prosecuted rose from 76 in 1987 to 180 in 1988. In addition, as my hon. Friend said, during 1988 the Streatham division police sent a total of 102 warning letters to motorists who were suspected of being in the area for the purpose of meeting a prostitute. That is a particularly effective way of dealing with kerb crawlers, which is being used not only in Streatham but in other parts of the country where there is a serious problem. For example, all over the west midlands the police have learnt from the kind of techniques that have been developed in Streatham and are using the method of sending rather obvious letters—to put it mildly—to kerb crawlers. The Government entirely applaud the Metropolitan police on their efforts.

There are some important points to be made about the maximum fines for soliciting and kerb crawling. Under the Street Offences Act 1959, introduced almost 30 years ago now, the maximum penalty for soliciting is £100 for a first conviction, although it is £400 for a second or subsequent conviction. That is exactly the same sum as the maximum penalty under the Sexual Offences Act 1985.

My hon. Friend has complained on his constituents' behalf about what they consider to be the low level of fines sometimes applied by the local magistracy. Magistrates are appointed from the community, and I dare say that they try to reflect as far as possible the views of the community. It is not for me or for the Government to criticise the magistracy, but it is important that the views of my hon. Friend's constituents are brought home to those who sit on the local bench. Of course, magistrates have to weigh up a number of other issues as well. The decision on the fine in each case is a matter not for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary or me but for the courts.

There are certainly regular complaints about the low level of fines imposed by the courts, which may sometimes be due to the difficulty that they face in trying to establish whether a prostitute has the means to pay a higher fine, and courts may also be aware that high fines are likely to encourage some offenders into further offences to pay them off or result in offenders being committed to prison for the non-payment of fines. My hon. Friend is right to say that the mere act of prostitution is no longer an imprisonable offence, but non-payment of fines can and sometimes does lead to imprisonment.

The level of fines needs to be debated publicly, and I dare say that the contents of tonight's debate will be drawn to the attention of those in Streatham responsible for the criminal justice system and that those who sit on the local benches will ponder my hon. Friend's remarks. We are dealing with nuisances here. They may be dreadful nuisances, but we are not generally talking about violence —although I realise that prostitution may attract violence —or about serious dishonesty.

I should like prostitutes to be hit harder in their pockets. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I are looking for better ways of achieving that, although it is very difficult. One way of driving prostitutes off the

[Mr. Patten]

streets is police targeting. Another way is to hit them hard in the pocket when the police have brought a prosecution successfully. There are a variety of ways of doing this.

My hon. Friend also raised the interesting point of disqualification from driving as a possible sanction against kerb crawlers. That disqualification offence was thought up so that the courts could remove bad drivers from the road. It may also be used, of course—but only by the Crown courts and not by magistrates—for offenders who use motor vehicles to commit serious offences, such as armed robbery. It would be difficult to envisage presently, in any event, disqualification from driving as a penalty for kerb crawling, however much of a nuisance kerb crawlers are.

On the important issue of living off immoral earnings, I wonder whether the proposal to create an offence of receiving immoral earnings in pursuit of immoral earnings would be the answer. Some interesting proposals have been put forward by the Criminal Law Revision Committee for the repeal of the existing offence and its replacement by three offences intended to deal specifically with people who organise prostitution, which may be a better route.

After those particular points, I must tell my hon. Friend that I share his view that the persistence requirement in the 1985 Act to which he referred does indeed reduce its effectiveness. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary feels the same. We are conducting a review of the Act in the Home Office, and we are looking at ways of strengthening it. However, it is quite clear from what my hon. Friend has said that the Streatham police, by using the second part of the provision, are being quite successful in bringing prosecutions, on which I congratulate them.

I know that some people are under the misapprehension—I should like to take this opportunity to clear that up—that kerb crawling can only happen from a motor car. Subject to the persistence requirement, it is an offence already under the 1985 Act to, as it were, kerb crawl on foot, from a bicycle or in any other manner, which again is something that I believe is not widely appreciated.

My hon. Friend was right to suggest that jail sentences for those who are prostitutes are not the answer. I had not heard before tonight of what to me is a novel and, if I may say so, exceptionally interesting suggestion—the electronic monitoring of offenders. As my hon. Friend probably knows, we are setting up this summer a pilot scheme to test the electronic tagging of offenders on remand. We shall be using it to reduce the remand population, to be put on bail. If that proves to be successful as a means of enforcing a curfew, we may look at the possibility of wider applications.

I am only speculating, but, if some future Criminal Justice Act or other legislative vehicle by some other name made electronic monitoring possible, I could see that a sentence ordered by the court to someone who was a persistent kerb crawler could involve a number of elements —for example, a fine, some community service work and also a period of six months or a year of curfew in their own homes between say, 7 o'clock at night and 7 o'clock in the morning, which I believe would meet many of my hon. Friend's needs. I am grateful to him, because I had not thought of it in the context of the persistent kerb crawler, and we shall consider that.

Prostitution will never be eliminated. Vigorous enforcement of the law, difficult though it is, will help, but, of course, it may also drive the problem from one area to another, which is what is known in the research trade—for people interested in this—as the "displacement problem". That has already happened. My hon. Friend has referred to the vigorous attacks on the prostitution problem on the Tooting side of the common, displacing perhaps to a certain extent the problem to the other side of the common in Streatham. The Tooting police are devoting considerable activities and resources in trying to deal with the problem. It is now up to the Streatham police to respond with equal vigour, which I believe they are doing.

I greatly regret the way in which the local council has dragged its feet in implementing a traffic management scheme to deal with this problem on the lines of the successful one in Tooting, which would restrict the flow of motor vehicles in the evenings. It would have wide public support. I understand that, at long last, the borough is thinking of doing something about it and that there will be a public meeting. It should have done something a long time ago, because I believe it will help greatly to improve the problem. The council should get on with it and make its own contribution to dealing with the problems on its patch. I am disappointed with the rate of action so far.

I hope that the sort of techniques and the increased police targeting in the area will bring a much happier situation to the residents of Streatham in 1989 than they experienced in 1988 or 1987. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his efforts on their behalf.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 January 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

9.34 am

AIDS

[Relevant documents: Third Report from the Social Services Committee on Problems Associated with AIDS, House of Commons Paper No. 182-I of Session 1986-87, and the Government responses to that Report, Cm. 297.]

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): This is the first time that the House has had a full debate on AIDS since November 1986. I suspect that I shall not be alone in welcoming the opportunity that the debate presents for me to update the House on such recent advances as have been made in the knowledge of the disease and to listen to views on a matter in which I know Members on both sides of the House have taken a real interest. In particular, we shall want to consider, in as much detail as time permits, the threat that AIDS poses to public health and to analyse the action that the Government and other authorities are taking to meet that threat.

It had been the intention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), to be present for the debate and to make a contribution at the end of it. There is a significant Scottish dimension to the issue. I know that a number of Scottish Members wish to take part in the debate. Sadly, my hon. Friend has had a bereavement and has to attend a funeral today. That is why he is not here. If, therefore, I am able to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, I may have to subject the House to a second dose of me. I regret that; I had not intended that that should be so. I shall try to deal with Scottish points, but I assure the House that any points with which I do not deal will be dealt with in correspondence by my hon. Friend. I know that the House will understand his reasons for not being here.

Since we last discussed the matter in 1986, all of us have heard a great deal more about AIDS and HIV infection. The initial impact on the public of the existence of this disease and the threat that it posed was very striking. The date of 1 December 1988 was designated World AIDS Day. It gave us all a further chance to refocus our attention on AIDS and to prevent increasing familiarity with the disease breeding indifference. However, there is a danger that as AIDS becomes an accepted fact of everyday life it will lose its impact.

Preventing the spread of AIDS depends crucially on people changing behaviour that puts them at risk. That will not happen if people become complacent. We must not lose, therefore, the momentum generated by the public education campaign that the Government have sought to sponsor with vigour, by the many contributions to the debate in the media, and by the efforts of those who are working in this area to ensure that proper attention is focused on the disease. We must not relax our attention or lessen our commitment.

Once again, let me say how much I welcome the debate. In some ways it is perhaps an overdue opportunity for hon. Members on both sides of the House to reiterate their collective awareness of the disease and their willingness to join in a sensible and, I trust, non-partisan way in devising effective strategies against it. When I was responsible for the Government's policy on drugs a few years ago I always said that there was no monopoly of wisdom in any part of the House on the issue; all of us have a contribution to make. Hon. Members know that their contributions will be treated seriously and that, where appropriate, they will be acted upon.

I have happy memories of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, which was passed after a great deal of discussion between Front-Bench Members. It had the support of both sides of the House. The Act has had considerable success in ensuring a flow of information from financial institutions about suspected drug trafficking transactions. It has also helped to ensure that there is a formidable further disincentive to drug trafficking—not just heavy prison sentences but the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking by what remains one of the most forthright legal procedures anywhere in the world. I hope that that kind of spirit will imbue this debate. Certainly it is the spirit in which I am approaching the debate, together with a willingness to listen to and to learn from each contribution.

I first became aware of AIDS when dealing with the drugs issue. Since returning to such topics on becoming Minister for health matters in July, I have sought to update and deepen my awareness of AIDS. I have visited St. Stephen's hospital, the National AIDS Helpline, the London Lighthouse, the Terrence Higgins Trust and other major facilities throughout the country and have attended major functions arranged by the National AIDS Trust and others. I have been greatly impressed and encouraged by the commitment and skills of the people whom I met. Inevitably, though, the recital of the facts of this disease, and personal witness of the suffering it causes, has been a sobering experience for me. On that basis, I want to give the House some account now of the situation as I see it, before listening with care to what other hon. Members say.

Our knowledge about HIV and AIDS has greatly increased since November 1986. We now have much more epidemiological information, and more is known about the clinical course of the disease. There have been movements forward in treatment. For example, the drug zidovudine—or AZT as it is more generally known—was licensed in March 1987. That and other things have improved the treatment and management of opportunist infections and cancers associated with AIDS. However, those are palliatives and, although they have improved, I fear that the plain truth is that we are no nearer either to a cure in the generally accepted sense of the word or to the vaccine on which so many pinned their hopes in the earlier days of the epidemic. I am advised that the chances of a breakthrough on developing a vaccine in the near future remain very small. The only certain protection against AIDS is not to get the virus in the first place. None of us can stress that too often.

Something else that has changed throughout the period, and worryingly so, is the fact that the predictions

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about the proportion of people infected with HIV who will go on to develop AIDS or AIDS-related conditions have become markedly more pessimistic. Five years ago I remember being told that somebody infected with the AIDS virus had a one in 10 chance of developing the disease. Two years ago—about the time that the House was having its last debate on this subject—information suggested a 30 per cent. chance. The latest evidence now suggests that at least 80 per cent. of those people infected with HIV may eventually go on to develop AIDS. Some experts are even more pessimistic than that. That is a sobering and troubling development.

Expanding our focus to the world, the picture is grim. The virus continues to spread and the World Health Organisation, with which, as the House knows, we keep in the closest touch and consider ourselves to be one of its more active members in relation to this topic, now estimates that between 5 million and 10 million people worldwide are already affected by the virus. Furthermore, although the numbers of reported cases of AIDS known to the World Health Organisation are only 130,000, it is estimated that the true figure is likely to be over 350,000. The World Health Organisation predicts that during 1989 and 1990 more than 400,000 new AIDS cases will occur worldwide.

Against that background, we in the United Kingdom have sought to develop effective policies. We believe that clear and determined action is needed in response to the challenge posed to our society by the virus and AIDS. We have a four-part strategy to achieve that, consisting of public education; infection control and surveillance; research; and the development of care and treatment services. That strategy is backed by a strong commitment to international co-operation to combat the disease.

Before saying a little more about Government action to open the way to the advice that I know will be given by colleagues about what else we can do, I should like to make it clear once again that we are all on a learning curve in this matter. None of us should hesitate to put forward new ideas, because in the end our only defence against AIDS is the generation of new ideas.

I shall now set out the factual background of my understanding of the extent of AIDS infection in this country. Our surveillance systems show that at the end of last year in the United Kingdom 1,982 people were reported as having AIDS, of whom 1,059 had died. Also at the end of December, just over 9,600 people had been found to be HIV positive. As I shall mention in a moment, those figures undoubtedly underestimate the true number of people who have become infected. We passed our first sombre milestone in October 1988 when deaths passed 1,000. We are just about to pass —I suspect this month —the figure of 2,000 reported AIDS cases. I fear that, alas, there will be many more such milestones.

One of the great uncertainties has always been accurately predicting the likely future spread of the disease. That is why my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), asked an expert group under the chairmanship of Sir David Cox, the distinguished statistician, to make predictions of the number of cases of AIDS which are likely to occur in England and Wales in the next two to five years. As the House knows, the group's report was published at the end of November 1988 and concluded between between 10,000 and 30,000 cases of AIDS are likely to be diagnosed in England and Wales by 1992. It recommended a figure of 13,000 cases as the basis for planning. By the end of 1992 the report estimated that between 7,500 and 17,000 people are expected to have died from AIDS. Those figures are lower than earlier estimates and reflect the welcome fact that the rate of increase of new AIDS cases has been slower than some once thought, largely we think due to changes in the behaviour of homosexual men several years ago when that community became aware of the AIDS threat. The report also estimated that by the end of 1987 there were between 20,000 and 50,000 people infected with HIV, compared with the 9,500 reported under the reporting system at the end of December 1988. Hence our concern that the official figures will always be an underestimate for a whole range of reasons with which the House is familiar.

We have accepted the Cox report as the best basis we have for future planning. We hope, having established the data base, to update and republish figures annually. I hope that that will be seen as a useful step forward. We took the opportunity at the end of last year to announce further improvements in the monitoring and surveillance of HIV infection and hope therefore to be able to narrow some of the ranges of prediction as we get better data and as our experience grows.

Before leaving the Cox report, I should say that it makes several important points that we should not forget. First, it makes it fundamentally clear to sensible folk how serious a problem we face in this country from AIDS.

Those who inject drugs and share equipment are putting themselves at possibly the highest risk. There is no great evidence that drug users are heeding the warnings and changing their behaviour. I know the concern about that in some Scottish cities. However, drug users need to change their behaviour. Professor Cox suggests that HIV infection amongst drug users in England and Wales could give rise to 1,000 AIDS cases by the end of 1992 and warns that a large scale epidemic among that group could lead to a rapid rise in the numbers of new cases. We must always remember that that group is a bridgehead into the wider community, being predominantly heterosexual in orientation. The tragedies that then unfold, with sexual partners and babies being infected, is alas becoming not unfamiliar in some of our cities. We must recognise the extent of the threat from that quarter.

As I said earlier, there is welcome evidence that many homosexual men have been heeding the warnings and changing their lifestyles to protect themselves and others against infection. I welcome that, too. It shows clearly that the one truth that we must never lose sight of, perhaps the one ray of light in what is otherwise a rather dark picture, is that there is nothing inevitable about the spread of HIV. It all depends on how we respond to a common-sense message. As the homosexual community is showing, the rate of spread of infection can be reduced by changes in personal behaviour. But all this depends on not dropping our guard. Sir David Cox says:

"It would be a gross error to regard even the lower predictions as grounds for complacency".

I wholeheartedly endorse that sentiment. Behavioural changes amongst homosexual men need to be sustained. Heterosexuals need to recognise that, while there is a small risk of catching HIV in Britain today, it could become much greater in future if the warnings are not heeded. The potential threat is serious, especially for those who change

partners frequently or who get conditions which cause genital ulcers, and possibly other sexually-transmitted diseases. The evidence from overseas—and especially from Africa—indicates the seriousness of the risks of heterosexual HIV infection. Coming much closer to home, the proportion of AIDS cases thought to be the result of heterosexual contact is at least twice as much in France as in this country so far; and in several other European countries such as Belgium it is higher still.

The writing is on the wall. We should be sure to read it. Perhaps it would be helpful if I said a little more about heterosexual spread. I am advised that heterosexual transmission of HIV is a complex matter which we do not yet fully understand. It is not clear why the facility of transmission between heterosexual people in central Africa is so much greater than within, for example, New York city where the virus has been well established among heterosexual drug misusers, including many prostitutes, for at least 10 years. That is an extremely important gap in our knowledge. There is some evidence that the higher prevalence of conditions which cause genital ulcers may be a factor, but it is probably not the only one.

AIDS is a developing problem about which our knowledge is constantly changing. When we look at the proportion of those with HIV who are likely to go on to develop AIDS, and in the absence at this time of clear data on infection via heterosexual contact, it becomes clear that we all must be cautious, especially as we know that a single act of unprotected vaginal intercourse can spread the infection. AIDS is a sustained and growing threat and people should not take false comfort from the current low rates of heterosexual spread in the United Kingdom or the differences in rates of spread abroad. Where uncertainty exists, the prudent err on the side of caution, especially when, as I have already made clear, most of what we have learnt in recent time about the disease makes it seem even more serious than was once thought rather than less so. There is no room for false comfort.

On that basis, I have to say that there is potential for the spread of the infection throughout the population and we cannot ignore that. Yet there are few signs that heterosexuals and drug users are changing risky behaviour to protect themselves. But protect themselves they must.

In trying to assess the extent of the disease, we thought it necessary in November to improve our monitoring and surveillance system. In doing so, we were greatly assisted by the recommendations of an expert group chaired by Dr. Joe Smith, director of the public health laboratory service. I should like to emphasise the care we try to take in obtaining and assessing expert advice before taking any initiative in what is a difficult and complex field.

We have asked the Medical Research Council to draw up, by the end of February, detailed proposals for a comprehensive programme of surveillance studies. Those studies will be designed to give us better information about how the epidemic is developing both in the general population and in those specific groups that are or may be at risk. They will include studies based on anonymous testing, that is, the testing of blood samples taken for other purposes in a way which preserves the total anonymity of the donor.

Those studies will be in addition to the surveys of pregnant women which the MRC has recently begun in Edinburgh and Dundee, as well as studies of other groups such as those who attend drug misuse services and sexually-transmitted disease clinics.

I am glad that the number of those who expressed reservations about anonymous testing has been less than some initially thought. Such worries as there have been have centred on the impossibility of informing and advising those who prove to be HIV positive. I should emphasise that the purpose of these anonymous tests is to obtain general prevalence data, not to make clinical diagnoses, and this is, in our view, the only way in which this can sensibly be done. But anyone who wants to have a named test can have one, and any doctor who thinks that a named test might be in the best interests of a patient can offer one free. Therefore, anonymous surveillance testing is in a category of its own and does not affect people's rights to know whether they have the virus and have their minds put at rest if they think that they may be carrying it. That is a crucial point.

Anonymous testing will provide valuable information about the prevalence of HIV infection by age and sex in various parts of the country and the rate at which it is spreading in the population.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my hon. and learned Friend saying that if an anonymous test takes place and a person is found to be infected there is no way in which the doctor handling the test and the patient can be informed that his blood is infected, and, if not, why not?

Mr. Mellor: I have already sought to explain the matter. The basis of anonymous testing is that, when the AIDS test is given, a sample will have been taken for a completely different purpose and will have been anonymised. If people feel that they may have had a chance of contracting the virus, they can go to their doctor and, with proper counselling, have a test. But the purpose of anonymous testing is to discover how far the virus has spread into the broader community. We cannot have anonymous testing yet have the ability to tell someone, "I am afraid that your blood is positive." However, that is in addition to all the other measures we are taking to ensure that no one need be in any doubt. It is not as if we are withdrawing from any of the arrangements that have already been introduced.

I hope that most hon. Members will agree that the general public are not preoccupied by the ethics of what we are proposing. They would be much more troubled if they felt that we had shied away from taking the necessary steps to get an accurate measure of the problems we face.

I am anxious not to outstay my welcome, but equally I am anxious to give the House the best possible account of where we stand as perceived from my Department, so I shall turn to other aspects of our strategy, particularly public information.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): There was a worrying report in this morning's papers that the Soviet Union would require testing and a negative result for all those visiting the Soviet Union for longer than four months. Has my hon. and learned Friend considered what that could lead to? It breaks through the principle of anonymity and raises the incredibly complicated question of the social drawbacks of individual testing. Although I do not expect that my hon. and learned Friend has had a chance to consider that information since it was published, I hope that he will look into it.

Mr. Mellor: We have sought to prevent a lot of arbitrary barriers to the free passage of people being put

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up around the world. Given the complications of AIDS tests, the time lag between getting the virus and the antibodies showing up, the difficulties of the test itself, which has a number of faults, and the problem that in some countries having a test puts people at some health risk as a result of some of the equipment used, we are very sceptical of such unilateral initiatives. Although it is not a matter for me, I suspect that there will be those elsewhere in government who may wish to make representations about the matter. We have sought to avoid unilateral acts by countries that, in my judgment, simply make the problem more difficult to deal with. Arbitrary barriers to travellers offer totally illusory protection against a disease that I suspect we shall have to combat in other ways.

Turning to the question of public education, I believe that we have taken some measures that we can be proud of to slow down the epidemic and prevent its spread. The Government have spent more than £20 million since March 1986 on the biggest ever campaign of public education on a health issue. Follow-up research has shown that it has greatly increased awareness of HIV and AIDS and public understanding of how it is and is not spread. It is just as important that people should know how it is not spread as how it is spread. We want to avoid problems in the workplace and some of the happenings in the United States. I remember one youngster in the United States who acquired the virus from a blood transfusion and was treated most disgracefully at his school. People must know how they can contract the disease, and equally they must know how they cannot.

Politicians are not always grateful to the media, but I am. The media have played their part in ensuring that a wide range of facts about AIDS have come forward, not all of which have been entirely accurate although much has, and that has been most welcome.

We are now at a critical point. The initial impact has begun to wear off and apathy must not rule. Familiarity must not breed indifference. That is why we look to the Health Education Authority, in association with health education agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to carry forward the development of a United Kingdom-wide public education campaign. We hope that the Health Education Authority will be able to develop strategies that will command the support of all hon. Members. The aim is to ensure that the policies could be conceived outside the Government machine to avoid any mix-up of criticism of the Government with criticisms of the campaign. I hope that everyone will lend their support to the campaign.

The HEA launched a new campaign just before Christmas with three aims: to influence behaviour among young sexually active people; to encourage people to act responsibly with regard to their sexual behaviour; and to provide information that people need to protect themselves and those close to them. All the material will be evaluated by independent researchers to see what happens.

I believe that the campaign so far has received widespread public support. However, it needs to be backed by initiatives targeted at particular sections of the population. I attach special importance to giving youngsters inside and outside school the facts about AIDS and a healthy lifestyle. That is a key part of preparing them for some of the difficult choices that they will have to make in future.

Just before Christmas, we launched the latest phase of the Government's anti-drug campaign which focused on the dangers of injecting drugs. I hope that the vividness of those advertisements has struck a chord with my colleagues. We will continue to tackle the problem of drug misuse with the greatest determination because the fewer injecting drug misusers there are the smaller will be the chance of HIV spread among them and from them into the wider community. Of course, we must be realistic. Some people will continue to misuse drugs. If they are not immediately willing or able to stop, we must ensure that they are helped to reduce the risk of infecting themselves or others.

We believe that many initiatives must be local. That is why we have asked every health authority in England to work with local authorities and the voluntary sector to develop local community-based initiatives aimed at dealing with the problem in their neighbourhoods. We have announced £14 million worth of new money for schemes next year, and some funds have been made available immediately so that staff can be recruited or redeployed at regional level to begin the necessary planning. Each district will be expected to nominate an office responsible for the planning and co-ordination of that work.

It is no good expecting people to change their behaviour if we cannot prevent the spread of infection in health care or other settings. Obviously there are few more deeply distressing problems that we must come to grips with than the spread of AIDS to people who have used factor 8 and similar preparations. We have taken measures since that tragedy to protect the blood supply and tissues and organs donated from transplantation, and we have asked health authorities to improve their infection control. We believe that infection through blood transfusion in this country is now virtually non-existent. Of course, there is no risk whatsoever from donating blood. Information pamphlets have been directed to other groups such as tattooists and ear piercers so that they can take steps to prevent HIV spreading.

I want now to refer to service development and the money that will be available next year. We made £25 million available in the last financial year and nearly £62 million this year, and nearly £130 million will be available next year. That is the scale of the increases that we think it is appropriate to make to combat the problem.

We are giving money to local authorities to encourage services in the community, and a circular is being issued today inviting each local authority in England to bid for a share of £7 million available for AIDS-related social services expenditure with grants on the usual 70 per cent. basis, with local authorities meeting 30 per cent. of the costs from their general revenue. The money will be targeted particularly on the 25 local authorities which currently face the greatest AIDS-related demand.

We have told regional authorities how we intend to disperse the remainder of the £130 million. North West Thames regional health authority will continue to receive the lion's share—more than £36 million—because it has nearly 800 AIDS patients already. The other 11 regions will receive allocations as best as we can grant them which best reflects the problem in their own communities. We are

also including a substantial new element, not just to treat AIDS patients, but to build up services which play a crucial role in preventing the spread of HIV.

I expect that at least £68 million will be spent on providing services for people with HIV infection and AIDS. Of the remainder, more than £50 million, I expect health authorities to build up services to prevent the spread of HIV by spending money on local prevention initiatives, genito-urinary medical services and drug misuse services. We are talking about quite substantial sums of money, I am glad to say.

We know the extent of the drugs problem. It is not simply a Scottish problem as 26 per cent. of those tested at the St. Stephens drug dependency unit have proved seropositive. The disease is spreading. We established 14 experimental needle exchange schemes in England and there are now 60 schemes in all the country. If injectors cannot be persuaded to stop, in the interests of individual and public health we must do everything possible to stop them sharing.

Hon. Members may have noticed that the final report from the research team evaluating the needle schemes was published yesterday. It shows that schemes are quite successful at attracting injectors, although not perhaps so good at keeping them in regular contact. They are attracting people who otherwise would not have contacted drug services and they are helping some people to stop or reduce sharing.

As someone who was very much in favour of those experimental schemes during my time at the Home Office, I am glad to see that the researcher considers that, although the schemes have limitations, they can potentially make an important contribution to preventing the spread of infection. We are considering the report to see what more we need to do, and I dare say that my colleagues will want to comment on it because, in the past, the policy, although I believe the right one, has been controversial.

We also want to expand accessible advice and treatment services where drug misusers can receive help with their drug problem and reducing their risk of contracting HIV. Substantial additional resources both north and south of the border have been made available for that this year.

We are particularly asking health authorities this year to strengthen their genito-urinary medicine services. That is the term given to the old VD clinic, the Cinderella service in so many hospitals. We believe that Cinderella must be put behind us because those services have a vital role to play in combating the spread of HIV and AIDS. Their clients include many people who are most at risk because their behaviour has led to sexually-transmitted diseases and because of the evidence that I have already mentioned that the transmission of HIV is more likely to take place if people are infected with some sexually-transmitted diseases.

We must remember that, in the past five years, some 2 million people contacted genito-urinary medicine clinics, so we are not talking about a small number of people. The workload has been rising significantly. It is a crucial service and it is under pressure. However, it should not be hidden away in places that might not be seen by patients as attractive places to visit or by staff as good places in which to work. In order to assess whether the clinics are playing a key role, the chief medical officer asked a small team to carry out a study of the current and forecast workload. The report has now been received and makes specific recommendations about resources, siting, quality of accommodation, manpower and training of staff. The recommendations show that health authorities will need to give much higher priority to the services. We accept that, and I am pleased to be able to say that we look to the health authorities to take full account of the report in using the new resources that have been made available. The services need to be improved to benefit those who use them now and in the future.

I am sorry if I have spoken for a long time because I know that many of my colleagues want to speak. However, there are many other points that I could make. In conclusion, I want to draw attention to the work of the Overseas Development Administration. It has committed over £16·5 million, through the World Health Organisation, other non-governmental organisations and research workers, to support programmes to help to understand and contain the spread of AIDS in developing countries.

International co-operation on AIDS is not optional; it is a necessity, as it is in many other areas. That is why the Government and, I am sure, the House, are pleased that last year we sponsored, with the WHO, a world summit of Health Ministers on programmes for AIDS prevention. We want to continue to take the lead in that.

I look forward to hearing the views of hon. Members. I hope that what I have said establishes some new points which may be helpful to my colleagues when shaping their contributions. The Government have tried to take the lead in publicising the threat of AIDS and helping the development of services to combat it. Obviously, there is a limit to what the Government alone can do, and it is only by continuing to work with the voluntary bodies, local authorities and so on and by individuals taking personal responsibility that we shall make progress in defeating AIDS.

If two years ago the message was, "Don't die of ignorance", today our message is, "Now you know the facts, act upon them".

10.12 am

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I welcome this opportunity to debate such an important issue and I thank the Select Committee on Social Services for the report it produced in 1987 which stressed that we need regular debates on AIDS.

The Minister has given the House the benefit of a useful description of the spread of AIDS. However, preventive and community services remain inadequate in most areas and non-existent in some. Unless we prepare a network of support services, including housing—which I was sorry that the Minister did not even mention—we shall inevitably drift towards the situation that now exists in the United States where AIDS sufferers are dying on the streets.

The Government must sharpen their approach to education on AIDS. The increase in AIDS among young people means that conveying the message to school children is especially important. The Government have made that more difficult in two ways. First they have allowed schools to opt out of providing sex education to pupils and, secondly, they have made it more difficult to discuss anything to do with homosexuality by passing section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

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I should like to put into context the sums of money announced by the Minister. Michael Adler, professor of genito-urinary medicine at Middlesex school of medicine, estimates that, up to 1992, cumulative costs of AIDS to the health services will be between £134 million and £1·4 billion. As the Minister said, the pivotal services are genito-urinary medicine, drug dependency services and community services, which are now and have been for many years, underfunded—Cinderella services. Therefore, we are building from an underfunded and inadequate base.

We cannot meet the unprecedented public health challenges that AIDS presents if we drip-feed small sums into the system. We need to plough into the infrastructure, especially into the services that I have mentioned, substantial sums which must not be clawed back from other services. I hope that the Minister will guarantee that the sums he mentioned today will be fresh money from the Treasury and not snatched from somewhere else in the Health Service.

The Minister said, and I welcome it, that he recognises that the problem of AIDS relates to men and women, and that heterosexual transmission is likely to spread the problem to all regions. I should like to draw the attention of the House to a plan produced in an article in the *British Medical Journal* which shows that 44 Edinburgh drug users who attended the city clinic then shared needles in different parts of the country. They went to Oxford, Bristol, London, Cambridge, Newcastle and Manchester. Therefore, there are no departmental boundaries between Scotland and England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It must be recognised that the disease will spread into all regions and we must plan and prepare on that basis.

The Health Education Authority has been charged with trying to convey the message, particularly the threat to heterosexuals. I hope that the Government and the Minister will reinforce that message by constantly contradicting reports which still appear in newspapers that stress that this is a problem only for drug abusers in Edinburgh or gay men in London. I bring to the Minister's attention an article in *The Sun* on 20 October 1987 written by the paper's supposed medical adviser. I give the Minister an opportunity to say that he disagrees with it. It says:

"The only people really at risk are promiscuous homosexuals and drug addicts.

The DHSS and the BMA have drummed up hysterical campaigns designed to scare heterosexuals and put us all off sex. But the facts show that they were wrong."

I hope that the Minister will say that such reports are not only wrong but dangerous. The fact that AIDS is likely to spread to all regions means that we must have a finely tuned and sensible regional distribution of funds. Will the Minister explain the regional distribution of funds? The figures that I shall give to the House were presented by Professor Maynard, director of the centre for health economics at York university. He has calculated how much each region has received per AIDS case. The northern region received £59,500 per AIDS case as at August 1988, Yorkshire region received £52,500, Trent £58,000, East Anglia £75,000, North West Thames £74,500, North East Thames £79,500, South East Thames £60,000, South West Thames £53,000, Wessex £62,000, Oxford £72,500, South Western £30,000, West Midlands £42,000, Mersey £49,500, North Western £50,000 and Lothian £20,000.

We must have an explanation of the regional disparity in the allocation per AIDS case. One per cent. of all men in Lothian between the ages of 15 and 45—not just drug abusers or gay men—are already HIV positive. That is why, unfortunately, Edinburgh has been called the AIDS capital of Europe. It is hard to understand why Lothian should receive one quarter of the amount received by one London region. Either there has been some awful error, which the Government must undertake to put right, or there is a more sinister motive. I hope that it has been an error and that the Government will announce that they intend to correct that inequity of distribution.

Mr. Jessel: Is the hon. Lady aware that some people who are infected and who need treatment for the disease will come into regions such as North West Thames, which covers the centre of London, to obtain treatment? There is, therefore, not only the cost of that treatment, but the cost of treatment for patients suffering from other illnesses and who need operations, who might otherwise be displaced. Why should not authorities such as North West Thames have a larger share per case of available resources?

Ms. Harman: I am not criticising the levels in the London regions, but the low level put into other regions, particularly Lothian. The argument that was put so cogently by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) about people coming into city centres when the problem is discovered applies to Edinburgh as well.

Either the Government must correct their mistake or there is a more sinister motive underlying the imbalance. I have listened time and time again in the House to Ministers complaining about the amount spent on health services in Scotland. When I saw the figures, it occurred to me that the Government might be trying to level down health spending in Scotland at the expense of AIDS patients. If the Minister has another, innocent explanation, such as that a mistake has been made that he would like to put right, I hope that he will say that to the House. I hope that he will not submit to the temptation to rubbish the figures or to say that he does not know about them. The figures were given by Professor Maynard at a conference at which the Minister himself spoke, so if he does not know about the figures it can only be because he did not listen to the other speeches.

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry to hear the hon. Lady playing to the Scottish gallery and making essentially spurious points. I shall ensure that the hon. Lady is advised by the Scottish Office about the details. She would be the first to complain if English Ministers were responsible for running policy for Scotland. A substantial amount of resources are available in Scotland. The hon. Lady should bear in mind one figure that appears to have escaped her. I said nothing to imply that I underestimated the size of the problem in Scotland. The problem there is large, and requires a large amount of effort to be devoted to drug-related issues. However, as of December, the number of full-blown AIDS cases for the National Health Service to treat in the whole of Scotland was 75. In the North West Thames Region alone, there were nearly 800. I should have thought that she would see that one does not have to reach for McCarthyite explanations to see why that amount goes to the North West Thames Region.

Ms. Harman: I gave figures not for the total amount for each region, but for the amount per AIDS case for each region. It is a pity that the Minister has accused me of playing to the Scottish gallery in expressing that concern. The health problem of HIV and AIDS in Scotland is a problem not only for Scotland, but for the rest of the United Kingdom, because of the transmission of the disease, which I have previously explained. I await, with interest, a further explanation from the Minister. I am not the only person to be concerned. My concern is prevalent among those who are involved with AIDS and AIDS services in the country as a whole.

I welcome the emphasis that the Minister said that he placed on education, and sex education especially, because, as he said, we are no nearer to a cure. He also said plainly and straightforwardly that youngsters must have the facts about AIDS, and I endorse that fully. With the spread of the disease among young people, the message for school children is especially vital.

I endorse wholeheartedly the Social Services Select Committee report on AIDS. It said that sex education and education about AIDS must be given to all school children. Yet the Government introduced the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 to allow schools to opt out of providing sex education. It is extraordinary that at a time when sex education and public health education about sex have never been more needed by school children the Government have provided an opportunity for such education to disappear from the curriculum.

I hope that the Minister, who is charged with dealing with the spread of AIDS, will agree that that is disastrous. Will he monitor the situation? I should like to know how many schools are opting out of providing sex education in the curriculum and, of those schools that are providing it, how many are informing the pupils about AIDS. The Minister needs to do more than simply endorse such education; he must find out what is happening in schools. It is not enough simply to quote, as he has in the past, the number of education authorities that have appointed AIDS officers. We need to know the number of school children who are receiving the AIDS message. I hope that he will confirm to the House that, if it is discovered that many schools are opting out of sex education and that a significant number of school children are missing the message, he will reconsider, with his colleagues in the Department of Education, the provision that allows schools to opt out of sex education.

The climate that has been generated by section 28 makes the task of reaching school children with such information more difficult. Those who work in schools fear that it will be difficult to find the dividing line between explaining about safe sex and promoting homosexuality. Perhaps the Minister can tell us, using examples, what the dividing line is between describing safe sex and promoting homosexuality. It would be useful for him to take the opportunity to make that clear and to reassure those who feel that they are under the shadow of section 28.

Another arm of prevention that is being directly undermined by Government policies is the family planning services, which are being cut. Those services have, for many years, played an important role in sex education, dealing with sexually transmitted diseases and providing public health information. Many women will not go to their general practitioners to discuss sexual matters or are not registered with a GP, and that is particularly the case among drug addicts, although many of them find their way to family planning clinics. The financial squeeze on district health authorities has been so great that many are cutting family planning services.

The Family Planning Association has said that 25 per cent. of all district health authorities have made cuts in the past four years or are planning them. In the past week, three district health authorities—North East Essex, Hampstead, and Barking, Havering and Brentwood—have proposed 50 per cent. cuts in family planning services. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that this is the wrong time to be cutting family planning services because we should be looking to them to play an enhanced role in the fight against AIDS. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to stress the importance of family planning services and that he will undertake to reverse those cuts.

I welcome the fact that the Minister mentioned needle exchange schemes, but I should have liked him to go further and to recognise that experiments with needle exchange schemes show that it is imperative that such schemes are widespread. Such schemes remain limited and patchy at present and I hope that the Minister will ensure that GPs become part of needle exchange schemes. That must mean that all GPs should be prepared to care for patients with HIV or AIDS and that needle exchange schemes must be in places and operate at times that are most convenient to intravenous drug users.

It is hard to overstate the importance of care in the community in relation to this issue. After the diagnosis of AIDS, the average time spent by a person in hospital is 20 per cent. compared with 80 per cent. in the community. A study by the Polytechnic of the South Bank has shown that fewer than 5 per cent. of people with AIDS are cared for by the family because of the way in which AIDS breaks up family ties and because of its prevalence in the gay community and among drug users. We have, therefore, an additional challenge to provide care in the community without a high level of family support. The Social Services Select Committee issued a strong warning about this, but I am sorry that it does not appear to have been heeded by the Minister.

In addition to meeting the needs of an ageing population, social services departments have to plan to provide care for a new group of people who need their services 20 to 30 years earlier than might have been expected. Community care will involve close liaison between health authorities and local authorities. It seems to me to be madness that, as we understand it the Government's review of the NHS, plans to take local authority representatives off district health authorities. When planning community care and the response to the growing number of people with AIDS, we should tighten the links between district health authorities and local authorities, not loosen them by taking off local authority representatives.

Because AIDS will affect all regions, all social services departments need to prepare. Preparedness is vital. The Government promised guidance about the development of local authority services, particularly social services, as long ago as April 1987, but it has yet to appear. I hope that the Minister will tell us when it will appear. I suggest that he uses the social services inspectorate. Care in the community will involve home care staff, training and recruiting new staff. The Minister should use the inspectorate to establish good practice and to develop it in all social services authorities.

[Ms. Harman]

The Minister should also ensure that social services departments have the resources necessary to develop the home care services which AIDS will demand. He has mentioned the £7 million, for part of which all social service authorities can apply. That figure is just a fraction of what the Government have taken away from my local authority—Southwark. The £7 million is derisory. If we are serious about care in the community, we need proper funding, not a pittance.

We also need more resources for the health part of community care. Health visitor posts in my district health authority have been frozen. How can that authority and health visitors play a part in developing services for people with AIDS when there are not enough in post to do the present job?

I should like all general practitioners to be trained. The British Medical Association has conducted a useful pilot scheme which should be taken up as a national initiative. We do not want GPs to have to learn by experience, at the expense of the first AIDS patients they see, how to provide decent care.

There was a note of complacency in the Government's mention of community services. I had the opportunity this week to talk to Joy Roulston, the director of the Abenour Trust project in Edinburgh. It took her three years to get funding for a project involving just six flats. We should remember that Edinburgh has been called the AIDS capital of Europe. She tried to establish a project involving just six flats for pregnant women—or women with small children—who have a drug problem. It is a short-term recovery unit for mothers and, helps to establish how the children are to be cared for. It is just the sort of community-based project helping with care and prevention on which the future strategy for dealing with AIDS depends. Despite the fact that she was in Edinburgh, it took three years to get funds for the project, although the project is excellent, she says that it is merely a drop in the ocean.

A new challenge is presented for social services departments by children who are HIV positive and—or have AIDS. We must have initiatives on fostering and adoption for the children whose mothers die. If we are not prepared we shall find ourselves in the situation which I saw in New York when I visited the city last year. A drug addict mother dies homeless on the streets and her child spends its entire life in a paediatric ward of a public hospital in New York. We must learn the lessons and prepare outselves with proper community care for mothers and children.

Community care also depends on the community's preparedness to care. The community will not be prepared to care if it is poisoned by prejudice. The Government should take a lead in speaking out against those, especially in the press, who bask in AIDS hysteria. We cannot have community care and a witch hunt. The Government have to choose. I hope that they will put themselves firmly on the side of community care and speak out at every possible opportunity against the witch hunt. Sadly, I feel that the Government have fed the witch hunt through the climate generated by section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

I am sorry that the Government have not mentioned AIDS and housing. It is impossible to have home care without a home. AIDS often means a notice to quit. People with AIDS suffer a serious problem of discrimination in housing. Most people with AIDS are young, and young people are least likely to have secure housing. Even if they have sufficient income, they are often discriminated against in applications for a mortgage.

I was told by a young man from Frontliners that young single people with AIDS are able to find a hostel place only until their disease becomes visible. As soon as it is visible, it represents a notice to quit, so even substandard hostel accommodation is no longer available.

It is important for people with HIV and-or AIDS to have good housing. Good housing and healthy living can lengthen the time between HIV infection and the onset of AIDS, and people with AIDS are prone to infection, so they obviously need a good diet. They need good housing. They are also likely to need adaptations to their homes.

Many people come to London, voting with their feet against the lack of services provided in their own regions, but when they arrive they find that they are homeless, that they have spent their money on travelling and that they have no friends. Michael Adler, the professor of genito-urinary medicine at the Middlesex hospital, has said:

"I wonder whether the Department of the Environment has yet heard of AIDS."

That view is widely shared by doctors, local authorities and voluntary organisations. The Department of the Environment is failing to respond to the challenge of AIDS. The Government should take a lead in providing resources for housing for people with AIDS and in encouraging local authorities to create sheltered housing themselves and through voluntary organisations. The Government must ensure that they have the resources necessary to do that.

The Government must also spread good practice among local authorities and voluntary organisations on such issues as confidentiality and non-discrimination. I should like the Government to call in the building societies and get a bit of sense out of them in a fair allocation of mortgages for people who are HIV positive. We need a national housing initiative, as housing is an essential part of care in the community for people with AIDS. Without one, we shall end up with the situation that exists in New York, which I have described.

It is when public fear is at its greatest that human rights are most threatened. I should like the Government to take a lead and to announce that, through their strategic role in data collection as an employer and as a provider of housing and other services, they will guarantee privacy and freedom from discrimination for people with HIV. The Government are a signatory to the European convention on human rights, which guarantees privacy and freedom from discrimination. I should like the Government specifically to acknowledge that they will guarantee the entitlement to those rights of people with HIV.

Mr. Jessel: Is not the most important human right the right to stay alive? With that in view, surely the highest priority in regard to human rights is the need to stop the spread of infection?

Ms. Harman: I do not like competition between human rights. The hon. Gentleman identified an important right, but there is no contradiction between it and the human rights of those with HIV and AIDS.

I hope that the Minister will not brush aside my proposals. They reflect wide consensus outside the House. The Minister must resist the temptation, to which I am afraid he has sometimes fallen prey in the past, to write off as party political any proposal that he has not heard of or thought up. I hope that he will join me in recognising the urgent need for a strategy that reaches into all regions and covers prevention, treatment and care.

10.39 am

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): In the 16 years in which I have served in the House I have not become renowned for paying compliments and tributes to Ministers, but, on this occasion, I make a heartfelt exception. I pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. Since he has been in office, I have watched his progress in dealing with this awful matter. He has been courageous and has done an enormous amount in his search for resources for which he has to fight every inch of the way. I am delighted to tell my hon. and learned Friend of my appreciation. The extra money is exremely welcome, but, unfortunately, it is evident that it will prove to be nothing like enough. There has been a slow spiral from the very beginning.

It is interesting that, although the Government's education programme may be criticised—every such programme is criticised—it has brought AIDS out of the closet and into public discussion. AIDS is no longer whispered about. The more openly AIDS is talked about and the more freely views are exchanged, the greater will be the likelihood that the powers that are available to us will be taken with renewed vigour. It is important that AIDS is discussed and given proper credence as the nation faces its most serious health threat for about 400 years.

Despite my initial praise for the Government, I must stress that much more needs to be done. The Minister recognised that fact. It is extraordinary that the nation has been riveted to the front-page treatment that has been accorded by the newspapers to the so-called health risks of salmonella. As genuine as the concern may be, it pales into insignificance when compared with the problems and difficulties of AIDS sufferers.

AIDS is a scourge of the medical world. It threatens civilised life as we know it. Men, women and children are affected every day. I accept the Minister's point that the Government cannot travel alone down that path, but they must face up to their responsibilities. A national system of free condoms and needles is essential to save those most at risk.

I suspect that AIDS is rampant in prisons. I have said that before, and I believe it to be so. Rightly or wrongly, those of us outside the Home Office with our feet on the ground accept that prisons are probably one of the most fertile AIDS breeding grounds. We cannot pretend that the problem is contained within the walls of any of our corrective institutions. There is a danger that, when inmates are released, they will unleash the disease on an unsuspecting heterosexual populaton. They may not even know that they have the disease.

I hope that the Home Office will take on board the more realistic approach that its chief medical officer has privately expressed to me and to other hon. Members who have been extremely concerned, which is that we should find some dignified way of issuing condoms. Such a system prevails in other countries.

Another distressing fact is that, on an issue of such national importance, one would have expected more than this select group of hon. Members in attendance. However, at least the nation can be sure that the cream are present.

I saw a report in *The Guardian* the other day about there being 10,000 HIV carriers in Britain. In a sense such figures are bunkum, because they tell us only of those who are actually known. The greatest difficulty is that nobody knows where the problem begins, where it ends, what resources will be needed, whether we will overprovide, or whether we will underprovide. Perhaps the Minister will allow me to express a note of appreciation to his Department and his colleagues who work on this sensitive issue. The figure of 10,000 is merely the tip of the iceberg. Nobody knows what horrifying situation may emerge. AIDS has claimed thousands of people who did not even know that they had contracted the disease. The first time we know about it is when they are virtually dead.

The issue is above party politics. I have visited several projects in the United States and here, just as the Minister has. On my last visit to New York, I was told that it is estimated that one in 60 children are born with the virus. That is a terrible figure, but we are still in the dark and have no idea of the true situation.

The picture in California is even more bleak. One in six children may die of AIDS before they are even old enough to go to secondary school. I have no way of knowing whether those figures are correct. Unless we take the lead, a holocaust will erupt. Thank God a vital start has at least been made. The Minister has paved the way for a health education programme.

My local authority has taken an early lead. Cheltenham borough council has paid for the first mobile AIDS education caravan. I pay tribute to the chief environmental health officer, Clifford Ride, who has been a leading light all the way. We are extending the support that should be given to people in the community. The Gloucestershire county council has also responded to pressure and is pioneering major health education developments, but the burden is still falling on voluntary organisations, to whom I pay great tribute. Some housing associations have already been mentioned, and I refer to the Stonham housing association. I support the views that have been expressed. The Department of the Environment has had ample opportunity to go to the forefront and say that housing is an important ingredient in the supportive assistance that is required by sufferers. I hope that we will have the chance to put a number of questions to the Secretary of State of that Department. Housing is essential to the care that must be provided in the community.

I am sorry to say that providing housing from scratch is likely to take two or three years under present bureaucratic procedures. I hope that something will be done and that housing associations specialising in caring for those in greatest need will be given the resources to enable them to move more quickly. The Stonham association has all the administrative know-how to do just that.

I want to mention one or two projects in which we should take an interest. As chairman of the Stonham housing association I say that we want to join all who are prepared to be realistic and who know about the awful harassment and inhuman treatment—and eviction—that is sometimes meted out to patients suffering from the virus. The National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation

[Mr. Charles Irving]

of Offenders is another organisation with which I have been happy to be associated since its foundation. It will soon open a small unit for women; even before it has opened, a long waiting list has been drawn up. Both the organisations I have mentioned care and want to do something about the problems, and I associate myself with them wholeheartedly.

Local authorities have tried, but their resources are scarce. Many of their budgets have been pared to the bone. I put in a special plea to the Department of the Environment and to my hon. and learned Friend, hoping that he will be able to persuade that Department to invest more in housing projects.

A few words about the future. My hon. and learned Friend mentioned the importance of safe sex and of a programme to encourage people to recognise the dangers in which they place themselves. We must resist the persuasive siren calls of the well-meaning moral brigade, which maintains that we must pretend that extra-marital sex does not happen. More thought must be given to the free distribution of condoms. Clean needles are needed by people who have not weaned themselves off drugs, which were killers long before AIDS.

I have visited many of the facilities in London. It has been a moving and tragic experience to see them run under the splendid care of dedicated people such as Michael Adler, who has already been mentioned, John Galway and Charles Farthing, to name but a few who are struggling on with few resources. My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) and I returned from these visits completely drained. We set down the views that we formulated in a report that the Minister has not yet seen.

Many organisations deserve great praise for their preventive work and counselling. I shall refer briefly to two, the first of which is the London-based organisation Streetwise. Many hon. Members will have heard of it. I have visited it twice recently; it is anxious to provide a hostel of some sort for its clients. I do not know whether the House realises that, because of various socio-economic problems, youngsters come to London, imagining that the streets are paved with gold, from the age of 10 onwards. Young boys and girls of 11 and 12 are on the game. Streetwise picks up a large number of these youngsters and counsels them. Some want to come off the game, some do not. Streetwise has one tiny crowded room. At 6 o'clock, whether the organisation has been successful or not, all the children have to go out on the streets because there is no provision for short-stay housing. So a crash pad is vital —and it cannot wait for two years.

I also had the privilege of visiting Lighthouse. I strongly recommend anyone who has not done so to visit it. My hon. Friend the Member for Drake and I were immensely impressed by the work it is doing. It is bewildering to think, given the size of the problem, that Lighthouse offers the only modern hospice of its kind in Europe. I congratulate its staff, who are backed up by a large army of voluntary workers who want nothing more than to help their fellow creatures in distress.

I strongly emphasise the need for a crash pad, not only in London, but in all our major cities.

The Minister has displayed considerable tenacity in the face of opposition even from his own Back Benchers in his efforts to enlighten the great British public. This is not an easy cause to espouse. Many of us who have espoused it in our communities have received unpleasant letters and telephone calls. To judge from some of them, I have neither father nor mother. Nevertheless, we believe firmly in what we are doing, and I pay tribute to my many colleagues on both sides of the House who work every week to provide what help they can and to stand up to this sort of vulgar abuse.

AIDS is Britain's most rampant killer. Over the years, measures have been taken to reduce the scourges of cancer, TB, dysentry, rubella, and, lately, salmonella. It is time we devoted resources and ministerial attention to ridding our shores of AIDS.

I do not denigrate the efforts that have already been made. I hope that it is not too wild to suggest to my hon. and learned Friend, with the greatest respect, that in the next Cabinet reshuffle a ministerial post might be created with sole and special responsibility for AIDS, given the massive threat that it will pose to the nation in the next decade. The costs of sensible preventive measures taken by the Government today cannot begin to compare with those of caring for terminally ill patients later.

We have not brought out the figures but they are astronomical. The cash implications will be dwarfed by the social devastation of the continued unchecked spread of the virus. We cannot rely all the time on the voluntary organisations who soldier on with great courage. Daily they are taking in sufferers from the streets of our cities, but now AIDS is beginning to rear its head in our towns and villages.

I recently visited Tanzania, and reference has been made to Africa, where in some areas entire villages have been wiped out. I hope that we do not see anything like that here. We must act now. The Government and the House owe it to the nation's children and grandchildren. If we do not act now, thousands of people will be wiped out through ignorance. That ignorance will be a terrible price to pay for lost future generations, especially if it were proved that we, as custodians of the nation's health, had failed to respond.

11 am

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak at an early stage of this debate, not least because of the importance of the subject to my constituents and to the city of Edinburgh.

I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) not just because of his interest in and deep knowledge of the subject, but because I strongly share his general attitude towards the people who suffer from AIDS. I believe that, when the British people understand fully the facts about the disease, a majority of them will agree with the hon. Gentleman's view.

The Minister has made a valuable contribution to the debate. A suggestion has been made in some quarters that, since the debate we had in November 1986, somehow the issue is not quite as serious as hon. Members—and certainly Ministers—had viewed it then. The Minister has refuted that. This is an enormous crisis in public health. As the Minister said, it is important to recognise that this is a new disease and, although we have learnt a lot about it, we have still a great deal to learn, not least about its transmission in normal heterosexual intercourse.

While only 1,059 have died of AIDS so far, as indicated in the Government's figures to the end of 1988, the reality is that many thousands are infected with HIV. The Government's figure is slightly higher than mine. They say that 80 per cent.—they have indicated that it may be higher—of the people infected with HIV will die of AIDS. In Germany a view has been expressed that it may be 100 per cent. if we wait long enough.

What must be understood is that what makes the disease difficult to combat is the delay between infection and development of the full AIDS syndrome. Although not much is known about it, it appears that minor symptoms sometimes occur after infection, but the average time between infection and the development of AIDS is between seven and eight years, but cases have developed between 18 months and 12 years after infection. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that AIDS might develop a great deal later than 12 years after infection.

The report produced by the Lothian health board under the AIDS (Control) Act—I was grateful for the Government's support in introducing that Act prior to the last election—has given an excellent account of AIDS in Lothian. I would go so far as to say that, if hon. Members would like to read a good summary of the position with respect to HIV and AIDS throughout the United Kingdom, and Scotland especially, they could do a lot worse than reading that valuable report. I was glad to hear Dr. George Bath being interviewed on Radio 4 this morning on a programme which included comments from the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) because he rightly took the opportunity again to spell out just how important this issue is to the people of Edinburgh. As my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham reminded us, in Edinburgh—the incidence of the virus is higher in Edinburgh than in the outlying parts of Lothian—1 per cent. of young men between the ages of 15 and 44 are reckoned to be HIV positive, which is a startling figure. To put it another way, the area with the highest incidence of HIV after Lothian is the North-West Thames regional authority, but Edinburgh has more than twice the percentage rate of infection recorded in that regional authority.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I do not want to enter into a competition on statistics, but it is worth bearing in mind that for the North-West Thames region, as for other regions in London, the concentration is very much on the health districts in the Inner London area. In the North-West Thames area the concentration is very much in my own health district, which is the Riverside area.

Mr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman will know that, under the AIDS Control Act, we have not only the report of the North-West Thames authority, but the reports of each district health authority, and that point is very well highlighted. One might well make a comparison between Edinburgh and the district health authorities rather than just the North-West Thames region.

I was grateful for the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham. We need additional resources in Lothian. I accept that we shall never have enough resources, but we have a serious problem in the Edinburgh area and we want resources to tackle that. I was interested to hear the Minister speak about the Government's objectives for the area, which are common to both sides of the House. He said that there was a need to build up services to prevent the spread, which of course is part of the solution. As my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham said, a lot of the resources are taken up in looking after the people who have developed AIDS. We have a tremendous opportunity in Edinburgh to slow down the rate of transmission of this virus throughout the community, especially between the injecting drug abusers and also into the wider community. I welcomed the Minister's statement about the needle exchange schemes.

Way back in September 1986 the McClelland report was published by the Scottish Home and Health Department. I shall quote one sentence from that report which was subsequently the view taken by the Government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. We debated the ACMD report in my Adjournment debate last March. The report of the Scottish Home and Health Department said:

> "On balance the prevention of spread should take priority over any perceived risk of increased drug misuse."

Of course, we want to reduce drug abuse, but the priority must be to reduce the rate of spread of HIV infection.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is making a most attractive speech, which I am greatly enjoying. All of us are only too well aware of the particular problems in Scotland. As I understand it, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland announced in December a further £6·5 million for AIDS-related services. That will in effect mean that those services in Scotland will have £12 million funding this year as against £6 million last year. I am sure that that will include a basis for doing much more work in the areas he has mentioned.

I also know that I can say for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary because it is what I say to colleagues in England, that when a legitimate basis for expenditure is found our task is to find the resources to meet it. I see the AIDS budget as one which will inevitably increase as the scale of the problem increases, and money is especially well spent in dealing with many of the areas that the hon. Gentleman has identified.

Mr. Strang: I am most grateful to the Minister.

We can use money effectively in the development of more needle exchange schemes. I believe that there is a strong case for establishing such a scheme within the prison in Edinburgh, although I accept that that is a controversial point. I was interested in what the hon. Member for Cheltenham said about the provision of condoms. We are aware that drugs are used in prisons and that, therefore, there is a risk of the HIV virus being spread in that way. I believe that we still have a great deal to do in Edinburgh to establish needle exchange schemes and to make them effective.

I was interested to read the remarks of the director of environmental health for Edinburgh district council, which is responsible for the housing authority and the environmental health authority, as opposed to the social services authority, which is run by the Lothian region. The director is not persuaded that the provision of needles through pharmacies is a substitute for the needle exchange scheme. The distribution of needles through pharmacies had been proposed by a Scottish Office Minister in an earlier debate, but I am not suggesting that there is any disagreement between him and the Minister of State, Department of Health.

Mr. Mellor: When I referred to funding I was talking about the service provision generally and what the hon. Gentleman said about the need for more to be done to deal with the spread of HIV infection. Obviously, I was not purporting to alter any of the bases of the specific issue of the needle exchange schemes. Obviously, that matter must be considered by Scottish Office Ministers and by other Ministers in the light of the evidence from the report that is now available. I am sorry to have interrupted the hon. Gentleman, but I wanted to make that point clear so that there is no misunderstanding.

Mr. Strang: I am grateful to the Minister.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will say something about the reports that have been published as a result of the AIDS Control Act 1987. In correspondence with me the Minister has said that the Government believe that it will be possible to improve the reports in future years. I was interested to read the report of the North East Thames regional health authority, which took the trouble to suggest how it thought the data in the reports could be better presented in the future. I commend that report to the Minister.

The authority suggested that the reports should be collated nationally, which was always the intention of the AIDS Control Act. We have had reports from the health boards and from the district and regional health authorities of England and Wales, and I had hoped that there would be a national compilation of them. This is only the first year in which the reports have been published and I accept that things will improve next year, but I hope that the Minister will accept that it would be beneficial if the reports were established on a more standardised basis so that there was a proper, national compilation of them.

When we discussed the AIDS Control Act we decided to place a requirement on health authorities not only to report the number of AIDS cases, but to give the best available information on the estimated number of HIV cases in their areas. The Minister's predecessor accepted the enormous importance of trying to get better information on the incidence of HIV in different parts of the country rather than working backwards from the number of AIDS cases in each area. That was the method used in the early days, but it was unsatisfactory. The Minister has accepted that the Government have recognised the need for the provision and publication of the best information obtained on the national incidence of HIV.

The main issue facing the Government at present on AIDS is prevalence screening or anonymous testing. I support the Government's acceptance in principle, of anonymous testing. We must consider prevalence screening because of the enormity of the disease. Everyone who gets AIDS dies and there is no dispute about the seriousness of it. There are other diseases, but prevalence screening is important, precisely because of the long delay between infection and the actual development of AIDS. On the grounds of measuring the Government's and the community's actions to control and reduce the rate of spread of the disease, and on the grounds of assessing how well we are dealing with it over the years to come, there is an overwhelming case for obtaining data on the incidence of HIV. We must address that issue.

It has been argued that none of the information obtained from prevalence screening will be useful, but I cannot accept that. The best examples of the use of such information are the tests that have been carried out in New York. Every baby born in New York has the polimerase chain reaction test and in practice it is a test of the mother. The blood samples that are taken from the babies are tested for HIV and what is obtained is a good measure of the incidence of HIV infection among the mothers. There can be no doubt about the value of that information, which will increase over the years.

Of course, the information from anonymous screening is not random. If one is aware of the nature of the data and it is collected over a number of years, it is incontestable that the information obtained will be valuable to the Government and the nation in monitoring the spread of the virus. Therefore, we will know what is happening long before some of the positively tested people develop AIDS. As I have said, it can take as long as 12 years for an infected person to develop AIDS.

We must be careful about how we implement prevalence screening and it must be anonymous. People must not be allowed to opt out, however, because the value of the data would be enormously undermined if it were a voluntary test. If we are interested in receiving useful information, we must remove that element of subjectivity. We must have genuine, anonymous screening. We could, for example, take a blood sample from every women who is expecting a child or test every patient from a specific hospital for HIV.

It is crucial that such tests are anonymous and I support what the Minister said in reply to an earlier intervention. If people are to accept prevalence screening, we must ensure that there is no way that the medical staff or the technicians can find out, when a test is positive, the name of the person tested. If anonymity is not achieved, we shall not command the support of the wider community for the implementation of such a scheme.

Each blood sample must be labelled, but it is important to consider what information is put on the label. I believe that the person's sex and age should be on the label. The geographical area or the name of the hospital should also be on the label. Obviously there are complications about which the Medical Research Council must advise the Government regarding whether the label should say where the test was taken or where the tested person lives. There could be difficulties because of double testing and so on.

The fourth element that must be included on the label is the reason why a person had a blood sample taken—the reason why the person was in hospital. We need to know, for example, whether the person is a neo-natal mother or a casualty. There can be no doubt that we need those four elements, but that is all. Certainly there is no case for information on race or socio-economic group. If we put more information on the label, people will lose confidence in its being anonymous screening. I suspect that a substantial amount of scientific opinion would agree that those four elements will be sufficient to give us over a period of years valuable and important information on the incidence of HIV in the community and, thus, on the degree of spread, the rate of transmission and the success of the Government's policies in various geographical areas.

I support the Government's statements on anonymous testing. If I have a criticism it is that it has taken so long to reach this stage. The bullet should have been bitten earlier. I know that these are difficult issues and that many questions need to be addressed and I know that there are ethical considerations and that there is a need for complete

anonymity. But when the Medical Research Council gives its advice to the Government, I hope that Ministers will give priority to proceeding on this issue.

I support the view that this should be a non-party issue, and I appreciated the support of the Minister's predecessor and the Government in the enactment of the AIDS Control Act 1987. I hope that the hon. and learned Member who has taken over from the previous Minister, who has moved to higher things at the Department of Trade and Industry, will continue the valuable support which I received from his predecessor. At the end of the day, this issue will be non-partisan only if the Government address it with the urgency that the British people know it requires and allocate the resources which the community perceives as necessary to counteract the rate of spread of the infection and to meet the needs of the tragic cases who have become infected and are about to develop, or have developed, AIDS.

This is a major crisis. It is the biggest crisis in public health for over half a century. It is up to the Government, Parliament, and the community to meet the size of the challenge.

11.22 am

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I apologise in advance because I shall have to leave the debate early to battle through our congested motorway system to a constituency engagement in the north, but I shall read *Hansard* carefully when I return to the House next week.

I am disappointed that so few hon. Members are present for this important debate and I wonder whether this is a sympton of the denial that is often associated with this disease. The Chamber should be full. I hope that if these debates become an annual event, which I hope they will soon, the Chamber will be full in recognition of the importance of the issue to the whole nation.

The Prime Minister, with her usual prescience, said that by the year 2000 AIDS would be the major problem facing our country. The World Health Organisation estimates that by 1991, in two years' time, 2 per cent. of the world's population will be infected with AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa the position is even worse, with 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. of many villages and townships already infected. That will devastate both the existence and economies of those nations and nothing can be done to stop it. The damage has already been done. No longer can we write off AIDS as something foreign and across the Channel, or as something confined conveniently to high-risk groups, such as homosexuals and drug takers.

We have already heard about the experience of Scotland. I understand that the disease is officially out of control among the heterosexual population there. Nowadays the major mode of transmission world-wide is heterosexual, not homosexual, activity. I believe that in one Paris hospital 85 per cent. of patients with AIDS show no sign of contact with high-risk groups.

The Cox report, which I welcome and which points to a certain under-reporting of AIDS cases, states that, bearing in mind that under-reporting, between 19,000 and 56,000 AIDS cases are expected in the United Kingdom within the next 10 to 15 years among people who are already infected.

The report of the Institute of Actuaries produced in 1988 looks further forward. It is interesting because the whole of the insurance industry depends for its survival on its figures being correct, so I assume that its figures carry particular credibility. The report states that by 1994 there may be up to half a million HIV positives in the United Kingdom. That is in the high range of its estimates, but it depends on what I would suggest is an optimistic assumption that the disease will be confined to men and to homosexuals.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): That is not true.

Mr. Butler: That is true and afterwards I shall show the hon. Gentleman the report. The assumption is certainly not true.

So far the Government's approach to the disease has been sadly ad hoc and responsive, which is disastrous because the damage is done for seven to eight years ahead. We must be pro-active rather than reactive. I wonder where the sense is in closing some of our hospital capacity now rather than mothballing it, because if the institute's projections are right—I accept that AIDS patients will spend only 20 per cent. of their time in hospital—in the foreseeable future we may need an extra 100,000 hospital beds.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister spoke at the World AIDS Day conference on 1 December, and I congratulate him because he went further than I have heard any other Minister go previously. I welcome the fact that he will update and publish regularly the Cox report and succeeding reports. He called for dispensing with the complacency that has characterised the debate on AIDS. He admitted that too often there was a process of denial in the approach to this disease. The history of plagues and epidemics through the centuries is of initial denial and of thinking that it cannot happen here, but it is happening.

The preconditions for success against this disease will be a belated recognition of the towering urgency and crisis that we are already facing. Information is as yet the only vaccine that we have. In the United Kingdom the public information campaign has increased awareness of the means of transmission of the disease, but sadly it does not seem to have affected behaviour among the heterosexual population. The Government's relative reticence so far has been reflected in many written answers that I have received.

The Minister mentioned that some years ago it was recognised the 30 per cent. of HIV positives would eventually develop the disease. I asked a written question on that when I was in possession of the facts of the Frankfurt and Redfield reports which show that up to 80 per cent. of HIV positives will develop the disease, but the Government gave me the figure of 30 per cent. That characterises the evasive attempts of his Department hitherto not to emphasise the threat and crisis of this disease. It is critical to our success in fighting the disease that we have the information for our "vaccine". That information is the AIDS status of the sexually active population. I believe that there is a case for mass testing. I know that people say that it might drive the disease undergound, but it is underground already. Up to 90 per cent. of those who are HIV positive do not know that they are and are infecting others unknowingly.

Another objection is that mass testing would impose a considerable cost on the Exchequer, but the cost would be small compared with the eventual cost of the disease. I believe that it costs about £30,000 per patient, and I also

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believe that there will be a massive loss of productive power from the economy. I predict that one way or another mass testing will come about in this country, and we can approach it either reactively or pro-actively.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) mentioned prisons. Prisons are a major source of crossover between the homosexual and heterosexual populations. They are breeding grounds for infection: levels of homosexual behaviour, tattooing and needle sharing are higher than those in the outside community. Prisons in the United States already bulge with HIV positives. I understand that in a New York federal prison between 30 and 40 per cent. of the inmates are HIV positive. The Spanish have tested all their prisoners and have found 18·7 per cent. HIV positive. About 120,000 people pass through our prisons every year, and even if the infection rate is half that in Spain it is clear that there could be an alarming outflow of potential infectivity into the population at large, threatening the wives and girl friends of prisoners who return to more normal behaviour patterns. By definition, prisoners have lost their civil liberties.

I believe that this is an overriding public health issue and that they should be compulsorily tested, although I accept that it should be done with full and appropriate counselling. Prisoners need the facts on which to base their behaviour, both inside and outside prison. It could be objected that prisoners' rights would be affected, but the population outside prison walls also has a right to protection against the disease.

I have heard from several quarters the call for condoms to be distributed in prisons, but I am very suspicious of such a move. The authorities would object that it condoned and perhaps even encouraged illegal acts inside prisons, but my objection is that it would be fruitless. Even the London International Group admits that no condoms are suitable for such use, and even among heterosexuals condoms fail all too regularly. I believe that the failure rate is between 12 and 15 per cent. Much of the propaganda telling people that they are safe if they use condoms misleads the public: it does not ensure safe sex.

Prisoners need a radical education programme on which to base their behaviour. Prison staff are very overstretched, and with the best will in the world I do not think that the job will be done properly if it is left to them. There may be an opportunity for voluntary bodies to become involved in educating prisoners.

Although I have not seen any reference to the defence implications of AIDS, I consider those implications increasingly important. The World Health Organisation has estimated that by 1991, two years hence, between 50 million and 100 million people will be infected worldwide.

Hon. Members should note the geographical distribution of the disease. In the middle east, eastern Europe and Asia its incidence is very low. So far, those areas contain only 1 per cent. of the total number of cases. If we are to believe the figures given by the USSR, it has only 90 seropositive citizens. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) may have latched on to a straw in the wind when he said that the USSR was now demanding testing for immigrants. Let us contrast that with the position in the United States, our major ally, where the disease is officially out of control and 2 million to 4 million people are already infected, 500,000 of them in New York alone.

It should also be noted that the group among whom the infective pool will be concentrated are men of military age, between 18 and 50. The United States has already tested the majority of its army, and in September 1987 it found that over 1·2 per cent. of single men over 35 serving in the army were already HIV positive. The rate of increase in the United States is accelerating, not decelerating, and the doubling time of the disease fell last year to 13 months. At that rate it will not be long before an unacceptably high proportion of men of military age face premature disease and death.

I am not suggesting that AIDS is a commie plot. I subscribe to the cock-up rather than the conspiracy theory of history. Nevertheless, although it is a bleak scenario, there is the potential for military destabilisation. The eastern European countries can afford to sit back for some years, given their low rate of infection. If they then took the kind of measures that are so much easier in totalitarian countries—such as enforced mass testing, shifting of populations or internal exile—they might find it far easier than we would to control the impact of the disease.

I understand that the Soviet media have announced that 540,000 people in Leningrad have already been tested. No one can tell me that that was done on a voluntary basis. I suspect that it was enforced, and the betting is that the 540,000 were composed largely of men of military age, between 18 and 50.

We should also consider the air defence implications. The fourth international congress on AIDS in Stockholm presented a large number of papers. Abstract 8581 reported a deficiency in visuospatial processes among HIV-positive men, while abstract 8582 reported a deficiency in vigilance and verbal memory among HIV-positive men—as opposed to AIDS sufferers. Paper 8595 reported cognitive defects among United States air force HIV positives.

When someone is flying a combat aircraft, it takes only a small cognitive defect to create the potential for disaster. Flying such aircraft requires extreme precision and lightning reactions. Combat aircraft cost many millions of pounds; an AIDS test costs about 50p. In a written answer, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces told me that he was very much aware of those abstracts, but did not intend to screen air force pilots. I hope that it will not take a future disaster to make him dispense with his reticence. Before the gutter press descends on me, may I say that those remarks have nothing to do with recent sad events.

The matters that I have discussed are covered by three, if not four, Ministries: there could be five if the Scottish Office were included. That shows, I think, that the disease is spreading its tentacles through every aspect of our daily lives. It emphasises the need for a strategic approach to the issue.

Professor Adler has called for a national commission to deal with the urgency of the disease. He has expressed his desperation about the lack of co-ordination of Government Departments. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham suggested that a case can be made out for an AIDS Ministry. If we do not act now, future—perhaps depleted—generations will criticise us. The whole history of plagues and epidemics suggests that extraordinary

measures need to be taken. AIDS is no exception. We have a window of opportunity in which to act, but it is closing and soon it may be shut.

11.40 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am privileged to be allowed to take part in the debate. I also had the privilege of taking part in the November 1986 debate.

The hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) made an interesting speech, and I agree with much of what he said. I agree that a national strategy is needed, but I became very nervous when he referred to testing. There are two ways in which to approach testing. One can oblige people to take tests or one can encourage them to take tests, as the Government have been doing. I prefer the latter course. I am not challenging the hon. Gentleman's good faith. We both wish to attain the same objective, but I counsel the Government to be cautious about taking up some of the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about testing.

The debate is timely. The fact that it is taking place now means that the Minister has had time to work himself into his new job. I underline what has already been said about the way in which he has responded to his responsibilities. I hope that he will continue to take the matter seriously. I hope also that the matter will not become a party political issue. There will always be differences of opinion about levels of expenditure, so I was nervous about the fact the the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) strayed into the realms of party politics. The Minister will understand the spirit in which the comment is offered when I say that he does not have a reputation for not responding to provocation.

There is also a danger that the general public may become complacent. There is no complacency in hospital wards, research laboratories and hospices or in the counselling, advisory and voluntary organisations. I believe that there should be closer co-operation between the Government and the voluntary organisations. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) referred eloquently to the work being done by Lighthouse and other charities. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the voluntary sector in the battle against controlling this disease. Hon. Members who take an interest in the voluntary organisations are filled with admiration not just for the work that they do and the way in which they do it but for the effectiveness of what they do. They are able—in a way that Ministers and Members of Parliament are never able to do—to warn those who are in the at-risk groups of the dangers and to suggest effective and acceptable preventive measures. They are talking on equal terms to the people whom they are seeking to help. No matter how well managed official bureaucracy may be, and no matter how well intentioned, the value of the counselling and advice given by the voluntary sector is much greater.

I give as one example of many the buddy system used by the Terrence Higgins Trust. It has provided nearly 250 buddies. It costs the trust £900 a year to finance them. They are on 24-hour call, they go out under any circumstances and they provide very effective help. There is no way in which to measure the value of the help that that organisation provides. We should recognise the quality, the quantity and the cost effectiveness of its work.

The Government must also pay attention to important matters relating to the voluntary sector. The problem is not unique to the voluntary sector, but I understand that it is very difficult for voluntary bodies to plan sensibly over a two or three-year period and to set up difficult projects unless they know how much Government money they can expect to receive. The Treasury rules create difficulties, but attention needs to be given to that problem.

I understand that the Department of Health expects voluntary organisations to make independent and separate applications to the different regional health authorities for central core funding for national activities. The £14 million that has been allocated to the regional health authorities is valuable assistance and will make a great contribution. Community-based initiatives are more effective because they are based in the community, but it is not sensible to expect organisations such as the Terrence Higgins Trust, Lighthouse, the Albany Trust and perhaps Streetwise to spend time, effort and resources on making individual applications to the regional health authorities for assistance. The national voluntary organisations should be allowed the privilege of making a once-and-for-all application. They should not have to run about the country trying to obtain core funding.

I was interested in what the Minister said about the Cox report. It is a valuable contribution to the debate. The recommendations are sensible and provide a basis on which to make plans. Does the Minister intend to use the Cox recommendations when planning financial increases? They are very substantial—38 per cent., 28 per cent. and 24 per cent. over the next three years. I know that the Minister has to fight his corner against the Treasury, but he said that he intends to use the Cox report as the basis for his Department's work. Does that extend to applying for additional finance?

There has been some difficulty over the advertising campaigns. I appreciate that it is not easy, particularly for a Conservative Government, to engage in some of these necessary advertising campaigns. Will the Minister consider involving the voluntary organisations in the planning of those campaigns? Their insight into the problem is special; they live alongside the problems that are experienced by the at-risk groups. It would be foolish not to allow them to take part in the valuable work that is already being done by the Health and Education Authority on a consortium basis. That would make it easier for the Government because if there were controversies they could say that it is not just down to the Health Education Authority—it involves the voluntary groups also.

When I visited the Terrence Higgins Trust I was slightly disappointed to discover that it could not run its valuable telephone helpline service for 24 hours a day. When I made my last visit to its premises, it had just finished a pilot project and had found that the telephone helpline could provide a valuable service in the hours when it is now shut down. At present it is operational for only certain parts of the day. A strong case can be made about that, because the Terrence Higgins Trust did the most valuable initial work to assist the homosexual group when it started to suffer problems from AIDS. I was interested to find that the trust now assists a wide range of groups. When I was there the trust advised some people who were inquiring about whether the AIDS infection could be spread through the

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Church and its use of the common cup. The trust is making a valuable contribution through its helpline service to others as well as the homosexual interest group.

My next specific question for the Minister may be a little unfair so perhaps he will write to me about it. I am a little disturbed by the experience of the AIDS Health Education and Advice for the Deaf organisation. There seems to have been a bit of a bog-up somewhere in the bureaucracy. That organisation provides specific help on AIDS for those who are deaf. Its general secretary, Mr. Peter Jackson, was told just before Christmas that the core funding was being withdrawn. Will the Minister look at that matter and see what he can do to put it right?

I should like to spend the last few minutes of my speech dealing with Scotland because part of the focus of the debate has been the position north of the border. I pay tribute to the work done by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). His private Member's Bill was a valuable contribution. We now have the benefit of some of the reports made under that legislation. The hon. Gentleman has made a valuable contribution, but I would expect nothing else of him knowing how interested he is not just in his own constituency, but in the city of Edinburgh.

It is a stark fact that in 1983, when I was elected to this House, as far as we were aware no intravenous drug users in Edinburgh were infected. Now, 50 per cent. of intravenous drug users in the city of Edinburgh are infected. Those statistics frighten me to death. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred to the remarks made on the radio this morning by Dr. George Bath that currently 1 per cent. of the 15 to 44 age group in that city is HIV-infected. That figure scares the pants off me. Some medical authorities have predicted that by the middle of the 1990s AIDS will be the biggest killer of young men in that age group in Edinburgh. We cannot ignore that.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East also referred to the McClelland report. I know that this matter is not directly in the Minister's brief and fully understand why we do not have a Scottish Office Minister present although I am sure that the report of the debate will be studied in the Scottish Home and Health Dept. The McClelland report was left unattended for too long.

I was interested to see the report by Mrs. Runciman, who chairs the Advisory Committee on the Misuse of Drugs. The report says:

"We are deeply concerned that many of the McClelland report's recommendations have not been acted upon and we consider that vital time has been lost in tackling the spread of HIV in Scotland. We emphasise that many drug misusers are mobile"—

that point was emphasised by the hon. Member for Peckham, and I agree with it—

"and that failure to curb the spread of HIV in Scotland will inevitably lead to the virus spreading more rapidly throughout the UK and beyond. HIV infection in Scottish drug misusers is not a problem for Scotland alone. it is a problem for the UK as a whole."

I agree that the response to the McClelland report has been too slow. To date, not enough of a lead has been given and until December there was a distinct lack of resources. Indeed, there is still a need for extra resources.

In our debate in November 1986 I called for condoms to be freely available in surgeries, clinics and at chemists. I intimated that I was deeply worried about the possibility of the spread of AIDS through the intravenous route into the drug-using community in Glasgow. I note that the incidence of AIDS among intravenous drug users in Glasgow is only 34·7 per cent., compared to Edinburgh's 60 per cent. However, I believe that the figures for Glasgow are understated because when I ask the people working in this area there, they say that street conventional wisdom in Glasgow is, "Don't go anywhere near any survey. Don't get tested. Don't do anything. Stay out of the road of the official bureaucracy." That is one of the biggest problems with the intravenous drug transmission route. The lifestyle of some 80 or 90 per cent. of drug addicts does not take them anywhere near a Government Minister or a television set. Some of them cannot even read. If they can read they are often in such a state of intoxication that they cannot comprehend the message. There is a massive problem in trying to connect with those people. It would be difficult for anyone, but I wonder whether the problem is receiving enough consideration.

Returning to the role of the voluntary sector, I do not think that there is any alternative to trying to get folk who understand what is going on in the streets, under the bridges and in back closes in Glasgow to do the necessary work. In my view, that is the only way to make any real impact on the problem.

As for Edinburgh, two things strike me more than anything else. First it is unbelievable that Edinburgh does not have a proper drugs dependency unit. I do not understand why the Scottish Office does not attend to that as a matter of desperate urgency. It may well be a party political matter, but I make the recommendation as positively and urgently as I can. Secondly, Edinburgh must have a more effective needle and syringe exchange system in the near future. I do not consider that it is effective at the moment and the Scottish Office should attend to that.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) has said everything there is to say about prisons. He has a proud record of arguing the case for action. I do not believe that we know what the dickens is going on in prisons. The spread of the virus in prisons is a unique situation. The spread of the risk depends upon the prevalence of the infection and that depends on the prevalence of activity. It is a desperate situation and again it is a gateway to the heterosexual population and that is very worrying. I believe that the voluntary organisations should be allowed to help. I understand that there are difficulties about that. At the moment voluntary organisations are technically banned from counselling and providing training in prisons. I know that the AIDS packs have been given to prison officers and I welcome that, but I do not understand how prison officers, in the context of the relationship between prisoners and prison officers, can easily make a connection that makes any sense whatsoever.

The Home Office should consider ways of introducing help through the voluntary sector. The Terrence Higgins Trust, the buddy system and the whole works should be turned on the prison system in an attempt to stem the infection.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that the issue presents unique problems for any Government because it is multi-disciplinary. As has been said, it involves various Government Departments and is, therefore, difficult to tackle. By its very nature, the campaign seeks to initiate changes in people's sexual and other personal behaviour and habits and that makes it a difficult problem for the

Government. It is uniquely difficult because it is a uniquely difficult medical condition to treat. I do not think that enough is being done. Every case that can be prevented will save future personal misery as well as future public expenditure. Nothing is more important than preventing the spread of the disease and we must apply more resources and engage in a more effective partnership with the voluntary sector to prevent the spread of such a dreadful disease getting further out of hand.

11·58 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Health started this debate in a sensible and low key way, and I believe that the debate has lengthened its stride after each successive speech. That must be one of the most important elements of the debate. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) drew attention to the dramatic threat of AIDS in this country and in the world as a whole.

The truth about AIDS is that anyone can become infected by HIV through blood contact or inheritance. I do not believe that inheritance has been mentioned in the debate so far. Everyone must be wary about that. Tests for HIV are very easy to carry out, but they test for infection only at the time of the test. If the virus is dormant in the body, it can become evident at any time. A negative test result does not guarantee absence of infection or give any idea of the risk of infection in future.

There is no cure for AIDS and no proven treatment for someone infected with HIV. There is considerable risk that a baby of an infected woman will become infected by AIDS. However, in spite of all that, attitudes to AIDS are extremely worrying and we should all welcome this debate on that score, because if nothing else happens—and I hope that much will happen—there should at least be greater awareness in the country about the threat of AIDS.

The fear about AIDS seems to be a mixture of a fear of the unknown, the incurable and the unlikely. There is also complacency in the belief that other people will catch it. They are usually identified as the immoral, those who behave promiscuously, black people—because of their supposed links with the spread of AIDS in Africa—homosexuals, drug misusers, and particularly homosexual drug misusers. It may be too easy for many people to blame those groups of people and their behaviour while avoiding questions about their own behaviour. Because of that, the infection has continued to spread among drug addicts in Scotland and in England and also among the heterosexual population.

I believe that there are still 14 Government-backed needle exchange schemes under which injecting drug misusers can bring in old needles and exchange them for new ones. I understand that by October last year 18,000 had used that service. However, too few of those people continue to use it. At the end of last year the statistics showed a 34 per cent. drop out rate after the initial visit and 53 per cent. after two visits. Perhaps the Minister has more up-to-date and better figures. Perhaps they are better than those I have quoted, but I have a feeling that if they are up-to-date they will show an even worse picture. I wonder whether health authority schemes based on the Government's scheme have been any more effective.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred to the report of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs which was extremely important. Ruth Runciman and her colleagues should be congratulated on the report. However, the Government's first reaction to it cannot be described as anything but bland. That was corrected somewhat in the more considered reactions towards the end of last year. I welcome the Government's confirmation of the report's categorical statement that prevention of drug misuse is now more important than ever. That cannot be stated too emphatically because of the horrors of drug misuse and the links between drug misuse and the spread of HIV. I pay due deference to the activities of the all-party drug misuse group, of which I am proud to be chairman. I pay tribute to the terrific work performed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) in the committee until he was elevated to grander and more powerful things. I do that because he is bidden to silence now.

I also want to congratulate the Government on what they are doing under the guidance of the inter-departmental ministerial group with regard to drug misuse and its connection with HIV. I particularly endorse the conclusion in its report, which was repeated by the Government, that effective and extensive education programmes are the most important influence on reducing the chances of people trying drugs and reducing the risk of the spread of AIDS.

The threat of AIDS overtakes even the miseries and threats of drug misuse. I am concerned that the Government have damned the advisory council's report with too faint praise and have shown too little willingness to embrace more wholeheartedly the report's recommendations to minimise HIV risk behaviour, despite the Government's more considered reactions that I mentioned earlier.

The day has now passed for the preparation of services "as necessary"—as the Government's reaction said—to reduce the risk of AIDS associated drug misuse. The report reads:

> "In all areas, substantial further expansion of drug misuse services will be necessary if services are to reach more drug misusers, and play an effective role in curbing the spread of HIV."

That means we should have more community-based services, more hospital-based services, more generic services and, above all, a better understanding of the problem among general practitioners. They should provide better services immediately and the Government must provide funding for that and for their education. This is a question of life and death for an increasing number of British people.

Some hon. Members have mentioned the special problems in Scotland and in prison. They require special and urgent attention and must not be pushed aside. The problems are serious in themselves and also pose a threat to the rest of the country as people move from Scotland and as prisoners return to life in the community at the end of their sentence. The problems of drug misuse show no signs of diminishing and deserve our continued positive attention.

The question of funding must be raised in this context. I shall give three small illustrations of the way in which the shortage of funds can affect work at the grass roots. First, I spoke yesterday to the London Lighthouse, which is run by the Terrence Higgins Trust. It has 28 or 30 beds available but, unfortunately, it is using only 18. That is

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because of a combination of the lack of pounds available to maintain the beds and the lack of trained nurses available to man the London Lighthouse.

Secondly, before coming to the debate I and my colleagues who share constituencies covered by the Eastbourne health authority attended a meeting with the regional chairman of the South East Thames health authority to inquire of him why his health authority has to carry out its work, including that involving drug misuse and the treatment of HIV, when it is funded to the extent of only 85 per cent. of the resource allocation working party's recommendation. That is the dramatic figure that a well-run, extremely efficient and thoughtful health authority has to work to because of a lack of Government funding for the region.

Even though the Government made £3 million available to regional health authorities last September to prevent the spread of AIDS among drug misusers and to help them make services better known and more widely available, it was not possible for the Government to help fund the East Sussex drug advisory council's trend monitoring unit—which is unique in Britain—largely because the 1983 drugs initiative fund had already been used up. The strategic approach mentioned by many other hon. Members is necessary.

There is a tradition of commitment to intersectoral co-operation within Brighton health district on drug misuse, AIDS and HIV infection. The co-operation between statutory and voluntary agencies has developed well. That is just as well because, in East Sussex, there is a significant drugs problem. East Sussex, tragically, has one of the highest notification rates per million of population in England, after London, Manchester and Liverpool. Many clients are poly-abusers of heroin, amphetamines, cannabis, minor tranquillisers, alcohol and cocaine, and for that reason, the drug advice and information service was set up in Brighton, funded by the Brighton health authority. It has been found that the awareness of the risks of HIV infection among drug users is extremely high. It was highest at the time of the Government's previous media campaign, but seems to have declined since, although such campaigns seem unlikely to change people's behaviour for any time. That was illustrated by the study on the illicit use of drugs in Portsmouth and Havant which was published last year. The drug advice and information service produced an excellent leaflet on AIDS and drug users which has been distributed among voluntary organisations and general practitioners, as well as through Department of Health channels. It is also of note that the drug dependency unit in Brighton has appointed a full-time member of staff to work specifically on preventing the spread of HIV infection among drug users.

East Sussex has also taken advantage of the educational support grant initiative to appoint a co-ordinator for drugs education in primary and secondary schools, further education establishments and youth services, although, as was said earlier, it is not so much the appointment that is important but the way in which it leads to more pupils acquiring a greater understanding of the issue.

I hope that I have given the House an insight into how one small area of the country, which faces a dramatic drugs problem, is dealing with the joint problem of drugs and AIDS.

I hope that what I have said will give greater encouragement to the Minister and the Government to take an even more imaginative strategic approach. Preventing drug misuse or achieving abstinence, where prevention has failed, remains the primary goal. However, HIV infection has given far more importance to the intermediate goals of attracting drug users into services and helping them to change their high risk behaviour. That is the crux of the matter, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said in the Scottish context. If we do that successfully, we shall prevent the rapid spread of HIV among drug users and, ultimately, among non-drug users, but additional resources for the expansion of services must be provided. The only choice is whether to spend money now on curbing the spread of infection, not only through health care but through education, social services, housing and voluntary organisations, to which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) drew particular attention, or to spend vastly more in a few years' time on the care of people with AIDS.

I welcome profusely what the Government are doing but humbly and hopefully ask the Government to do more. If the Minister pursues the problem of AIDS with the vigour with which he pursued the problem of drugs when he was a Minister of State at the Home Office, I and other hon. Members will not plead in vain.

12.14 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I thank the Government for making this debate possible. I give them considerable credit for much of what they have done in response to the problem of AIDS. The British Government have been considerably ahead of many other Governments in this respect. That does not mean, however, that they are perfect, and I hope to draw attention to some areas in which improvements can be made. A good start has been made and the Government deserve credit for that.

I cannot stress too strongly how important a fair, sensitive and sympathetic understanding of AIDS and HIV infection is. Too often, the advent of this tragically life-threatening disease has been used as an excuse in the tabloid press and by some irresponsible commentators for prejudice, intolerance and abuse. Many of those who face the onslaught of the disease or the virus which gives rise to it find that they are fighting not just their potential illness but discrimination and harassment. They need care and help but often find themselves at the receiving end of blame.

We need a cure for two diseases—for HIV and for the bigotry to which it sometimes gives rise. A number of my constituents—some of my friends—are touched by the disease. Many are living with extraordinary courage with the day-to-day facts of AIDS. Some face opportunistic infections and illnesses which are painful in the extreme. All are living, struggling human beings, citizens who deserve the understanding, sympathy and help of the House and the Government.

What should the policy response to AIDS be? I shall outline four categories of concern—first, public health education; secondly, health care and social support for

those who are affected; thirdly, medical research to combat the virus; and, fourthly, tackling the discrimination to which AIDS has given rise.

The Government deserve the greatest praise in regard to public health education. They rightly identified very early on that it is the principal weapon in our armoury against the spread of HIV. I have some criticism to make of some of the advertising material, especially that in the early days, which seemed to generate more fear than enlightenment, but there has been a considerable improvement. I might question the recent decision of the Health Education Authority not to use television advertising or hoardings in its latest campaigns. Restricting advertising activity principally to newspapers does not, I suspect, reach the major audiences who need to be reached. I hope that the HEA will review that decision in the not-too-distant future.

The greatest possible credit must be given to people who work in hospitals which are most affected by the AIDS epidemic. They provide the highest possible quality health care to people affected by the disease.

The Government have set aside funds for the AIDS problem. I was pleased to hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer announce in his Autumn Statement the increased funding that he is allocating for AIDS in the coming financial year. However, two questions remain, and I hope that the Government will begin to address them. First, for example, is the only currently prescribable drug that has been shown to have particular effect against the HIV virus, AZT—nowadays known as zidovudine—available to everyone who can benefit from it? I suspect that, currently, the answer is yes. However, if studies that are currently being undertaken in the United States reveal within the near future that AZT can be especially effective when given to those who have not yet developed AIDS symptoms but are HIV positive and that early use of AZT can be considerably more effective than late use, I hope that the Government will ensure that AZT is available for use by patients who require it.

At the same time, perhaps the Government could take up with Burroughs Wellcome the cost of AZT. Pharmaceutical companies' pricing policy for drugs that can be used to tackle the HIV virus is extremely important. As drugs become more widely used and more effective, pricing and cost to the National Health Service will be extremely important.

Another health care question is whether prophylaxis against certain opportunistic infections, and especially against pneumocystis, which is the most deadly of the opportunistic infections that can affect AIDS sufferers, is available.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of medical research. Successful research carried out now can save hundreds of millions of pounds in long-term patient care. Sadly, a cure for AIDS will amost certainly be a long time coming. In the meantime, all indications are that, within a relatively short period, it will be possible to produce anti-viral therapies and drugs that can at least slow down or, in some cases, halt the progress of the virus in an infected person. The development of such drugs is crucial. The use of drugs for early intervention, at the first moment that infection is known, to try to slow the latency period between infection with the HIV virus and the development of the constellation of infections that are known as AIDS is extremely important. I hope that the Government will direct more of their research effort to early intervention.

I have some questions about the wisdom of the decision by the Medical Research Council to devote so much of its directed programme effort to the search for a vaccine. I suspect that a vaccine will be a long time coming, and will be found only after we have some more successful drug therapies to counter the activity of the virus. The priority should be to tackle early intervention rather than to develop a vaccine. That does not mean that we should drop all efforts in search of the vaccine, but perhaps the priority of the MRC-directed programme has been wrongly focussed in that respect.

The other issue connected with research and the use of early intervention drugs is the availability of successful therapies for patients who need them. Much work is being done on a number of possibly hopeful products in the United States. Two of the especially hopeful ones are drugs known as DDI and soluble CD4. There is some sign that such drugs can be more effective than AZT. They are already under preliminary patient trials in the United States. Those trials must be done; we must know more about the side effects and be careful about how such drugs are tested and produced. But if they are clearly shown to be effective, it is important that they be rapidly and readily made available for people infected with HIV in Britain. I hope that the Government will ensure that the time between the identification of a useful product and its provision for patients who need it is as short as possible.

Discrimination is the fourth subject that must be dealt with. The insurance industry practises a certain amount of it. Admittedly the industry has a major problem with people who are already HIV positive. We must accept that. An assessment of the risk of mortality will clearly be affected if people are in this position; it is beginning to cause considerable difficulties with access to housing and mortgage finance. That aspect needs careful consideration in the context of housing policy over the next few months.

However, we must take issue with the insurance industry on a number of points. First, the predictions that the industry makes about the spread of the HIV infection go wildly beyond those made by Professor Cox. We must ask the actuaries precisely where they get their information and ideas about future spread from. It is on that information that they base much of their premium accounting, and I do not think they have got it right.

We must also tackle the insurance industry about its treatment of the groups in society who have become known as high risks. The message that we need to give the industry is that, with HIV, it is not membership of a high-risk group that matters as much as high-risk behaviour. The difficulties that young single men experience in obtaining life insurance stem from a misconception on the part of the insurance companies about the nature of the virus and the ways in which it is spread. The questions that are frequently asked on insurance application forms about whether applicants have sought counselling for AIDS or have been tested for it, and the deductions made by the insurance companies based on their answers, are particularly dangerous. They act as a deterrent for those who should be going to get tested. This will become especially important if, in the near future, it becomes obvious that a product such as AZT can be especially effective in the early stages of infection. It will then be especially important for people to come forward and identify themselves for testing at the earliest possible opportunity. If insurance companies' deterrent actions make it difficult for an applicant to receive insurance cover

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if he answers yes to the question whether he has been tested, it will be difficult to persuade people to come forward for testing. That is a basic and simple point and I hope that insurance companies will begin to take it on board.

The secondary area of discrimination which is of great concern is employment. We know of a number of cases where an employee has been dismissed because he is HIV positive. Although some progress has been made in industrial tribunals on the question of unfair dismissal, the problem remains. A number of people have been dismissed, ostensibly for other reasons but in reality because they have been found to be HIV positive. There should be no excuse for an employer to take such action, where the medical circumstances of the person concerned are simply that he is positive, and is still perfectly able to carry on his work without any danger to his fellow employees or to the general public.

In some ways even worse than the relatively small number of cases of dismissal are the requirements that are now being made by a number of firms and organisations for applicants for jobs to take HIV tests before they can be considered for employment. I fear that a number of firms are especially bad in that respect. Texaco is the most obvious. It requires potential employees to take HIV tests, despite the fact that there is no medical reason why an employee of Texaco, who registers as HIV positive, may not be able to provide years of extremely valuable and useful work to that employer. British Airways, too, requires a similar test on its employees. The same used to apply to Dan-Air, which some years ago decided to employ only female cabin staff on its aircraft. I am pleased to say that Dan-Air was taken to the Equal Opportunities Commission because of that decision and, after a thorough and extensive investigation, a finding was made against it. Dan-Air advanced as its reason for taking that decision its concern about HIV infection among men. The Equal Opportunities Commission made its finding and Dan-Air, I am pleased to say, abandoned its policy.

I hope that other employers who are undertaking similar activities will rethink their employment practice. One of the most worrying examples of such employers is the Metropolitan police. A potential recruit to the Metropolitan police must fill in a questionnaire which contains the question that appears on insurance forms about whether one has ever been tested or counselled in relations to HIV or AIDS. That is not good enough. I am afraid that the answers that I have received so far from the Home Secretary to my questions about that practice have been unsatisfactory.

Many states in the United States have implemented anti-discrimination legislation which makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against someone because of his HIV status. It would be useful if we could ensure that such legislation was put on to our statute book. I hope that the Government may give some consideration to that in the coming parliamentary Session.

We need to co-ordinate our activity over a wide range of concerns affected by the threat posed by AIDS and HIV. We must consider public education, the care and the social support available to those who are infected and the crucial question of the research that has been done and how it has been put into practical effect. We need to ensure that discrimination does not take place arising out of the tragedy of AIDS.

The Government have made a good start on many of those aspects of the problem, but there is much more that must be done, and I hope that the Government will take further steps in many of the areas that I have outlined, because, hundreds of thousands of lives depend on it.

12.35 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) made an interesting and well-informed speech. I hope to make an equally worthwhile contribution to the debate and, perhaps, to touch upon some of the points that he raised.

Society falls into four categories in the context of today's debate. First, there are those who, alas, are suffering from AIDS or the HIV virus. Secondly, there are the doctors, nurses and all those engaged in the care and treatment of and research into AIDS. They are familiar with AIDS. Thirdly, there is a number of people, such as Members of this House, medical journalists and a relatively small proportion of the community who are not professionally qualified, who have sought to inform themselves as much as possible about the nature of this dreadful disease.

Fourthly, there is the vast majority of the population, our constituents, who, I am afraid, despite the best efforts of the Government and the health education agencies, have only the sketchiest knowledge of what it is all about. They do not profess to understand AIDS fully, nor do they appreciate its extent. In fact, they do not realise the implications of it. If today's debate will do something to dispel a little of that ignorance, it will be time well spent. There is a real danger, as my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has already said, that AIDS will just come to be accepted as part of everyday life.

If public knowledge about this matter is sketchy, it is also fair to say that about us. We know how many people have AIDS and how many people have died from it. We know that, at the end of last year, there were 1,982 cases of AIDS, half of whom had died of the disease. There are about 9,603 known cases of HIV, but that does not mean that that represents the total figure. We do not know how many people are HIV positive, but the estimate is about 50,000. The comparable figure in the United States is between 1 million and 1·5 million people. It is also estimated that, in this country and the United States, up to 90 per cent. of those people will, during the course of the next decade, develop fully blown AIDS.

We must grasp the implications of this new phenomenon. For a start, new and extremely expensive forms of care are required. The Government have allocated a further £130 million over the course of the next three years to cover the cost of extra nursing care, but will that be enough? It is a substantial figure, but, frankly, we do not know whether it will be adequate. All care will not be in hospital. In this morning's debate several hon. Members have referred to the need for community care and how important it is. It is relevant to know what the Government's reaction will be to the Griffiths report. Perhaps all one can say on that is, how long, oh Lord, how long? We are to have a review of the National Health Service, and I hope that at the same time we shall have a response to Griffiths and be shown how we shall proceed.

We know that hospices and the hospice care movement, which has become increasingly important for caring for what might be described as the conventionally dying, will almost certainly need to expand substantially to cope with AIDS victims. The Government have allocated £7 million for local institutions and voluntary bodies which, as several hon. Members have said, are so important in this context. Will that be anything like enough for the role that will face the hospice care movement?

We have heard figures of the likely number of AIDS patients and there are varying estimates of the cost of hospital treatment. Hospital treatment alone probably costs about £25,000 per patient, excluding all the ancillary expenses. It is not difficult to begin to estimate what the cost of AIDS will be to the country simply in terms of £sd. The costs could be astronomical and could seriously affect the whole development of the NHS, the plans for which we look forward to hearing shortly.

Furthermore, at a time when the proportion of people in their late teens and early twenties is diminishing, an increasing number of them will be unavailable for the work force because they will be dying of AIDS. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) spoke of the implications of that for the armed forces. Let us remember that, while the NHS and the independent sector of medicine will be faced with a diminishing pool from which to draw nursing recruits, an increasing number of those nurses will have to devote their skills to caring for AIDS patients at the expense of their other duties.

There are at least three steps that the Government must take. First, they must undertake research into treatment and cure, and that is exactly what they are doing to the tune of some £31 million. The Medical Research Council is directing a comprehensive programme, and I am not sure that I agree that it is for us to be telling it in which direction its research should go. It is satisfactory that research is going on and that sums are available for it. Recently I was talking to a researcher in this area who told me of a conference that he had attended, at the end of which a representative of the MRC asked any researcher who had a project on AIDS to tell the council what it was and the council would fund it. That paints a rather different picture of medical and other research from what we are often led to believe.

Secondly, the Government must encourage local initiatives for the care and treatment of AIDS patients. We have heard how sparse they are, and obviously they will be needed increasingly. Some voluntary organisations are particularly well equipped and experienced to provide that care.

Thirdly, the Government need to mount campaigns of education and information aimed particularly at preventing people from getting AIDS and, again, the Government are doing just that. But it is proving extremely difficult and it is a sensitive and complex area for advertisements and promotions. I am sure that initially the Government wished to aim at the whole population to try to explain the problem. In doing so they perhaps shocked people because they had to use, on radio and television and in the press, language which had not previously been used in polite circles—I put it no higher than that—and it upset many. But I am sure that it was right to do that to ensure that people were aware of the problem.

Now, rightly, campaigns are being aimed at the most vulnerable groups by way of posters, newspaper advertisements, leaflets, television and so on. The trouble is that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) has said, we need only tell people that eggs are likely to give them salmonella for everyone to understand. Everyone has had stomach trouble after eating food of one sort or another, and that is the kind of issue that the media are happy to grasp the opportunity to publicise. But how can we explain in simple terms what is meant by HIV, ARC and AIDS, when the symptoms are not specific and such symptoms as are present may be symptoms of something quite different? People may be suffering from HIV with no symptoms whatever. How can we get the facts across to young, fit men and women who are enjoying life and, inevitably, experimenting?

The "Don't inject AIDS" campaign was a good one which seems to have got across, and the current poster aimed at drug users which we see in the Underground is very effective. I am not so sure about the double-page newspaper advertisement showing someone suffering from AIDS and suggesting that 30 others probably have the virus. I do not know whether either the presentation or the wording will be understood by those at whom the advertisement is aimed, if indeed they read it. It is not particularly eye-catching. It could also be misunderstood: it could be interpreted as meaning that one person in 30 with HIV may develop AIDS. But, as my hon. and learned Friend the Minister said, there are estimates of 80 per cent. and more. Perhaps the advertisement is not ideal.

I am not necessarily criticising the Health Education Authority, or advertising agencies if they are responsible. It was a worthwhile effort. I use that example simply to illustrate the problem of putting over the facts and figures about this complex matter. The dilemma is in deciding the style and content of the message that we are trying to put across. If we try to tell people what they should and should not do, we are likely to be criticised for preaching and moralising. If, on the other hand, we speak in vague terms, we shall be criticised for not being specific.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the former Under-Secretary of State for Health who recently left office, was criticised occasionally for saying things like, "Don't sleep around", but that is the sort of direct language that is necessary. As with so many things that my hon. Friend said, at least it got people talking and thinking. Perhaps Ministers should not preach, if by that we mean referring to personal conduct based on religious principles; people, after all, have differing religious principles. One might hope, however, that some of the religious leaders will occasionally do a bit of preaching about this, and particularly that the Church of England will take a lead from the Chief Rabbi.

Is it so wrong to moralise? Surely to moralise is to lay down what is right and what is wrong. In many spheres that is a matter of personal judgment: what is right for one person may be wrong for another, not least in matters of sexual activity. Surely, however, it must be wrong to indulge in practices that not only put the person indulging in them at risk, with all the accompanying costs to the community, but put others at risk of a long and distressing illness and premature death. Part of our education programme ought to involve moralising in that sense.

In her admirable analysis entitled "The 20th Century Plague", Dr. Caroline Collier suggested that we should bring back into prominence two old-fashioned words—chastity and fidelity. The Health Education Authority might care to consider using those watchwords in future campaigns. This problem can be controlled not by

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Government but by the behaviour of individuals. When a problem of this kind arises, people tend to say, "They ought to do something about it. What are they doing?" —"they" being the Government. The Government are doing a great deal. I hope that this debate will provide further publicity for what they are doing.

At the end of the day, whether AIDS will be controlled or contained or whether it will become the worst epidemic that mankind has ever seen will depend not on Government or Parliament but on the extent to which individuals, especially those who are sexually active or who are in the habit of taking drugs, are prepared to adapt their lifestyle.

12.51 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I, too, welcome this debate and I congratulate the Government on initiating it. It has been a constructive debate on one of the major issues facing this country. I intend to concentrate solely on those with AIDS who are sent to prison and on the kind of care that is given to them while they are inside.

The report of the Select Committee on Social Services "Problems associated with AIDS', illustrates how little is being done for those with AIDS who are serving prison sentences. Recommendation 40 says:

"We reiterate our conviction that prisoners who are seriously ill should normally be in hospital, not in prison". Hon. Members who have any experience of prisons will fully agree with that recommendation. Recommendation 41 says:

"If the Departments responsible for the prisons of this country have grasped the full implications that AIDS and HIV will have for the prison system, they have yet to show it." Those are the Committee's comments, not mine.

We do not know how many prisoners are suffering from AIDS. How can the prison authorities find out? Some sufferers may say when they go into prison that they have AIDS, but others fear to do so. In some European countries, all prisoners are tested for AIDS on reception. Although it may not be a popular suggestion, we need to consider the introduction of a similar procedure. If we knew how many prisoners were suffering from AIDS, a prison department policy on reception and treatment would have to be introduced. Many prison inmates who suffer from AIDS are treated like the lepers of old. No one wants to know. They are put out of the way and out of sight. Although the rights of prisoners in general may be limited, if a prisoner has AIDS his rights are virtually non-existent. A prisoner suffering from AIDS is not always put into a prison hospital, and in any case the conditions of many prison hospitals are an utter disgrace in this day and age.

However, having seen a prison in my constituency, I pay the warmest tribute to the way in which prison staff, who work under often the most appalling and inadequate conditions, deal with the normal complaints that they have to treat. However, the treatment that a person suffering from AIDS can look for in prison is virtually non-existent. I understand that only Brixton prison has some provision for AIDS sufferers. By "provision", I mean that Brixton prison hospital has two or possibly three beds where some kind of treatment can be given to a prisoner suffering from AIDS. The sad thing is that the authorities do not seem to have any idea of the numbers.

The vast majority of prisoners suffering from AIDS are put into single cells, away from other inmates who may not wish to have anything to do with them. They have little or no association. They exercise and eat on their own and must use only their own utensils, because, as I shall show, the prison authorities have not yet started to understand them or to give the sympathetic consideration that should be given to anyone who is suffering from AIDS and is in prison. Although I am sure that there are some sympathetic prison hospital staff who would willingly try and who would like to give care to the people in their charge, that is not true of all prison staff. I am told that some prisons refuse to accept any inmate who is thought to have AIDS. I suppose that that is because of the fear of what AIDS may do to the people who are fortunate not to have the illness.

Paragraph 92 of the report of the Select Committee on Social Services leads one to ask what is happening. However, I must pay tribute to the Minister of State, Department of Health, as have other hon. Members, for the progressive thought that he and many of his colleagues in his Department have given to this matter. I know that he was once a Home Office Minister. Paragraph 92 states:

"in our Report on the Prison Medical Service . . . we discussed briefly the problem of AIDS in prison. Lord Glenarthur assured us last year, on behalf of the Home Office that there was 'absolutely no complacency' about AIDS . . . It is therefore surprising to learn that the Home Office has decided to issue protective clothing to all prison establishments for the use of officers dealing with patients suffering from AIDS. Such a reaction appears to reflect apparent ignorance of the method of transmission of the AIDS virus and of the risks to officers when dealing with such inmates."

I accept that the Minister is a sympathetic person. He and I have often dealt with issues of mutual concern. Therefore, I beg him to find out after the debate—I realise that he cannot do so during it—whether that philosophy is still operating in the Home Office. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that if that is its thinking, heaven help people suffering from AIDS who are sent to prison.

We have heard a great deal about the funding that is available throughout the country. What funding is available within the prison department? What funding is available for the current year, which one assumes will end in March? What funding is proposed for next year? I understand that there is a moratorium on all prison expenditure for the current financial year. If that is true, it appears that whatever money may have been spent, no additional money will be spend on helping people and prison officers working in our prisons and on people who have AIDS and are in prison.

I share the view that has been expressed in reports that inmates with AIDS should not be in prison but should be in outside hospitals. However, I understand that that would create problems. If someone is serving a long sentence it is difficult to find a hospital that will accept such a responsibility. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Home Office to ensure that there are modern prison hospitals with all the modern facilities that are needed to treat the disease, where patients can be kept and not treated in the way that I have seen them treated in prison. I am not quoting from reports now. I have actually seen inmates being segregated, with all the problems that that creates.

Finally, if we examine this increasing problem, as other responsible bodies including the DHSS have, it becomes

clear that there really is hope. As other hon. Members who have not made such extensive comments about the problems in prison have said, not only will action benefit inmates who have AIDS while in prison, but it will greatly benefit them and their families and friends when they eventually come out of prison and start life in the outside world.

1.3 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): This has been a serious but depressing debate. Perhaps the least depressing part of it was the comment of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State that if any projects are produced for assisting with solving the problem of AIDS, it is his job to find the resources to enable them to go ahead.

The problem of AIDS is made very depressing by what is apparent from the debate and from all the literature: there is no great understanding of the disease. There is no explanation of the difference between the transmission of the disease in Africa and in America and the significant differences between what is happening in Britain and what is happening in the United States and the rest of Europe.

My constituency is in the Riverside district of the North West Thames regional health authority. The Riverside district has some of the highest incidences of people with AIDS and people who are HIV positive. My constituency contains a large number of such people, probably because St. Stephen's hospital, which is about a quarter of a mile outside my constituency, has the Kobler unit for the treatment of AIDS patients. That is partly a reflection of the number of people in inner London who are in the groups which are vulnerable to becoming HIV positive, but it is also a reflection of the fact that people who have, or suspect that they may have, contracted HIV to come to London either to get treatment or to escape from their backgrounds or from a society which may be less tolerant of people with that disease than those in London. As a consequence, inner London areas are forced to accept the enormous responsibility of looking after people who suffer from HIV and AIDS. The social services, the Health Service and council housing departments have so far tackled that task to the best of their abilities with the support of the Government who have provided considerable financial resources.

The problems facing AIDS patients have been well rehearsed in the debate. An HIV patient suffers from isolation within the community, discrimination in housing —and probably in employment—and socially at the hands of erstwhile friends, colleagues, acquaintances and neighbours. HIV sufferers also have personal problems of isolation, uncertainty and fear about the future. There was a time when it was thought that someone who was HIV positive would not necessarily develop AIDS. Although the suggestion is that there is an 80 per cent. probability that HIV sufferers will develop full-blown AIDS, the reality is that illnesses among HIV positive patients are significant even before they develop full-blown AIDS and become recognised as AIDS statistics.

HIV sufferers place excessive demands on the social services, the Health Service and the voluntary services. That demand also falls on the rest of the community. We must all be able to understand and support them. We must also be able to help people who come into contact with HIV sufferers to understand the problems facing sufferers and the threat that they do or do not pose to people who come into contact with them.

The Government's advertising has concentrated quite rightly on the groups in the community who are at high risk of AIDS such as drug users and the gay community. However, the message has not been conveyed that AIDS is not just a disease of the gay community or drug users. It is a disease of the heterosexual community as well. It is only a matter of time before significant numbers of people acquire AIDS not by misusing drugs, or being part of the community which other parts of the community despise wrongly, perhaps, or through blood transfusions, but have simply acquired it by leading a normal life. That message must be put over.

One of the sad consequences of AIDS that I have witnessed in inner London is the upsurge in prejudice and physical reaction against the homosexual community. That is very worrying, but is perhaps always latent in the heterosexual community. However, that prejudice has been given a reason to come back into the open again in a very distressing way in inner London.

Ignorance about AIDS is not confined to the uneducated or ill-informed. I am afraid that from the stories that I have heard from the medical school in Charing Cross hospital, problems of ignorance arise among people in the medical profession. The amount of education needed and the necessity for change in attitudes is much more urgent than was first thought.

I am more concerned about the future services to be provided for people who are HIV positive than about those provided today. No one can predict how many patients there will be in the next 10, 15 or 50 years. It is impossible to foresee the course of the disease, the percentage of infection that will occur and whether ways of controlling the spread of infection or of curing people with certain strains of the infection will be found. I suspect that, on the present evidence, it may be optimistic to speculate that we will be able to cure all strains of AIDS and HIV infection, but over time we may be able to control them.

The number of infected people making demands on the inner London health services and the voluntary services is rising exponentially and rapidly to a point where, if action is not taken now to provide care within the community, it will be too late. We shall be forced to take rushed action when the problem causes severe social tensions within the community.

People who are HIV positive experience different problems from those with full-blown AIDS. They need to be able to live a normal life in the community. People with AIDS are likely to need much more nursing care and more attention from health professionals. People who are HIV positive face housing problems which must be met. That can be done partly through hostels and sheltered housing that will allow them to live within the community but be protected and provided with necessary counselling. Those problems must be addressed now. That is difficult when we cannot predict how many people will need the resources and what types of resources they will need. However, the evidence is such that we should be making much greater provision than is apparently being made, certainly in inner London.

Anonymous testing was mentioned earlier. I understand the civil liberties arguments and I substantially agree with them. I understand that the need for research-based

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

understanding of the spread of the disease is overwhelming. However, I am concerned that if the testing is left on a purely voluntary basis, people who are HIV positive and who do not understand the risks of their condition may unwittingly infect other people.

AIDS is much more serious and presents a more serious prevention problem than many other diseases. A line can be drawn more effectively than it has been so far between the anonymity of testing and being able to help people who are unaware of their problem but who will need support and counselling. Such people could be tested when they attend for a blood test or visit a hospital for other medical reasons.

Even more serious than the domestic problems of AIDS is its international consequences particularly as it affects the less developed countries, notably in Africa.

The official statistics coming out of Africa significantly understate what seems to be the reality from and anecdotal evidence of people working in the communities of east and central Africa. It is likely that the communities there are suffering badly from an endemic version of AIDS which has spread through the hetrosexual community by normal sexual activity. It is not subject to the expectations that were originally formed about the way in which AIDS would be transmitted and it is, therefore, not subject to the normal preventitive measures that can be taken to stop its transmission.

I have heard it said—I suspect that there may be an element of exaggeration—that officers of the World Health Organisation are deeply pessimistic about the future of central Africa. They believe, because of the way in which AIDS has become so well established in those communities, that unless a natural response is developed within the human body to the AIDS virus, AIDS is likely to create such devastation that those countries will find it difficult to exist much beyond the next 20 or 30 years. The problem is worldwide; it is not a problem that Africa can face or address by itself. It is not merely a research problem but a sociological problem of the African villages and way of life.

The spread of AIDS is a problem in which we, through the Commonwealth, are almost uniquely able to assist. I know that a great deal has been done through various development agencies and the World Health Organisation, but part of the difficulty that is faced, especially through the WHO, is the reluctance of Governments in those countries seriously to address the problem and to acknowledge its extent. Our Government should be examining carefully, ways in which to persuade those Governments to accept the assistance that we, Europe and the United States should be able to give them so that they can provide the sociological support necessary to overcome the problem. That effort should be increased even more, although I realise that the Government do a great deal at the moment and intend to continue to do so.

The research problems connected with AIDS are part and parcel of the effort required and research needs to be supported on a worldwide basis. Although this country's research effort is paramount, our co-operation with research in the United States and the WHO must be such that it will lead to the development of the cure for AIDS which we all desire.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I can see five hon. Members who have been here for the whole, or a substantial part of the debate. I understand that the House would like to hear the Minister reply to some of the points that have been raised, so that gives us about 60 minutes before the Minister will seek to catch my eye. The arithmetic is obvious.

1.18 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I congratulate the Government on deciding to introduce routine anonymous testing. It is an important and courageous step, which has been advocated for several years.

It is important to establish the prevalence of HIV in this country. We know that there are about 10,000 cases, but some estimates are that the figure is nearer 50,000 and, possibly, 100,000. Anonymous testing will give us information about the regional breakdown of those figures, the age profile and the numbers of men and women infected. It is an important step and will mean that all the resources that are chanelled into public education and local authority support in this epidemic will be used more wisely. It is frightening when one realises the prevalence of the virus. In December, the Minister said that up to 25 per cent. of homosexual men in London have the virus. We have heard that half the drug addicts in Lothian region are HIV positive and that the virus has spread into the general population to the extent that 1 per cent. of men aged between 15 and 44 carry it.

The Cox report, which was commissioned by the Government, projects that there will be between 10,000 and 30,000 AIDS cases by 1992. That is up to 15 times the present level. It is significant that the estimate is that one third of those will be heterosexual. AIDS has broken into the heterosexual community and once there, its spread will know no bounds.

A news feature in the United States a couple of weeks ago found that, of a sample of 1,100 children, prostitutes and others who live on the streets of New York, 74 were HIV positive. That is 7 per cent. of the total. The Centre for Disease Control in the United States says that, by 1992, a total of 263,000 people in the United States will have died from AIDS. That is just three years away. Some 1·5 million people carry the virus in the United States. They will die of AIDS before the end of the century. We are talking of an epidemic of historic proportions.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) when he spoke about Africa. It is estimated that 15, 20 or even 40 per cent. of the population there carry the virus. The problem is truly heterosexual there. Half the carriers are men and half are women, and most are of working age—the population on which the economy depends. The hon. Gentleman speculated about whether some kind of human resistance might develop. I am pessimistic about that possibility. A study of prostitutes in a district of Nairobi found that 85 per cent. of the 1,000 people tested were HIV positive. In the light of such figures, it is clear that everybody is vulnerable.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 400,000 people will die of AIDS this year and next, and that between 5 million and 10 million are already infected. We have already heard a wealth of statistics, but it is clear that AIDS is the greatest threat to human health this century. That is widely acknowledged to be the truth, so what are we doing about it?

The only real hope—the only chink of light—must come from research work. I was a research scientist and have brothers who are medical researchers. One has been involved in AIDS research. I am, therefore, interested in the size of the Government's budget for research work on AIDS—£7 million this year for the Medical Research Council's directed programme.

AIDS is the greatest threat to human health this century, but how much are we spending on finding a solution? Only £7 million out of an NHS budget of £20 billion. It works out at 0·03 per cent. of our Health Service resources. Frankly, that figure is pitiful.

During the summer, I wrote to the Minister's predecessor, asking for a much greater research effort. The answer was that the Medical Research Council was getting all the funds that it had asked for. I cannot believe that. However, if that is the case, the Government should be proactive and point out their concern to the Medical Research Council and the medical community, and ask the MRC to put much greater emphasis on AIDS research.

Next year, the budget will increase to £14 million. That is a doubling of the allocation, but it is only keeping pace with the spread of the disease. The figure for 1992-93 is £16 million. The figure is doubled for this 12 months, but it will be static after that.

Mr. Mellor: It will go up.

Mr. Williams: I hope that the Minister will take up that point and give me an assurance that, in 1990-92, the budget will at least double every year, in step with the spread of the disease.

The AIDS research budget in the United States is over $1 billion. We should compare our £7 million with the £600 million that is spent in the United States. Their research effort is literally one hundred times greater than ours. Our research effort needs to be stepped up tenfold immediately, and doubled every year in line with the spread of the disease. That is our only ultimate chance of finding a vaccine or improved drugs to slow the progress from HIV to AIDS.

Another main aspect is public education and the Government's efforts in that regard. Two years ago, leaflets were distributed, and there were television and newspaper advertising campaigns. It was on a far too small scale. It is not enough to hit people just once with the message. The message must nag people all the time. Until we find a cure—we may never do so—the only message that we can offer is that people must change their behaviour. For the next 10 years, it will come down to individual behaviour.

We have heard that the public education budget for local authorities is about £14 million. To the ordinary person, £14 million sounds like a lot of money, but when we divide it among our 650 constituencies it works out at £20,000 per constituency. That means that each constituency has the equivalent of one full-time worker trying to stop the greatest threat to human health this century. That is the extent of our defence—just one person per constituency trying to tell young and sexually active people to modify and control their behaviour. Again, it is a case of far too little. When the history of this chapter is written, it will be seen that, as with many environmental problems, our action was too little, too late.

I end by quoting my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who, in one of our parliamentary Labour party meetings, said as a throwaway remark that AIDS was a greater threat than the Red army. It is worth dwelling on that remark, because I am persuaded that it is true. Between now and the turn of the century far more British people will fall victim to AIDS than to the Red army. Our defence budget is £20 billion a year; our research budget for AIDS is £7 million a year. I ask the Government again to start thinking hard about the scale of the problem—and in a proactive way. Politicians think in terms of economic growth of 2 or 3 per cent. a year; if it is as high as 4 or 5 per cent., we lose control, as the Chancellor has done. Unfortunately, AIDS is growing by 100 per cent. a year and seems likely to continue to do so for several years. So we must think in those terms.

I ask the Government to devote 10 times as much money to research, to local authorities and to public education, and to remember the regrettable fact that the budget needs to double every year.

1.31 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I look forward to welcoming my hon. and learned Friend the Minister on his first visit to my constituency in his new role. We shall show him many areas of health care on the island. One of the few that receives publicity is the fact that the Isle of Wight is a favourite holiday resort of haemophiliacs. We stock larger quantities of Factor 8 than do most district health authorities. The tragedy of tragedies in all this, as evidenced in this sensitive debate, is what happened to those who received infected donated blood and Factor 8.

The Isle of Wight is not a constituency primarily at risk from AIDS. Representing one of the largest and oldest populations in the country, I suggest that its incidence in our community is low. But we have three prisons, and I promised in my election manifesto that I would campaign for a change in the law to make screening for AIDS compulsory in our prisons. I could not possibly go as far as the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) went; he said that no one who seemed to be suffering from AIDS should have to stay in prison any longer. I included the promise in my manifesto not by way of censure but as a helpful contribution to the psychology and running of our prisons.

I pray in aid the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons on Her Majesty's prison, Parkhurst. It is the only national prison surgical unit in the United Kingdom and receives prisoners needing surgery and treatment from all over the country. The report is dated 30 November 1988, and paragraph 3158 reads:

> "We recommend that all inmates undergoing surgery should have routine blood assessments for Hepatitis B and HIV. Apart from emergencies, surgery should not be undertaken unless the inmate consented. Failure to observe this in the private hospital sector has already led to successful litigation."

I suggest to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that that is a clear indication, from the highest level within the prison service, that there are misgivings about the fact that prisoners are not currently being tested for AIDS.

There was a recent tragic case on the island when a person died in Parkhurst prison. I know that it will come as no surprise that the individual was known to be a male prostitute, who was probably HIV positive, but during his time in the prison he would not allow a blood sample to be taken. As a result of his death, which occurred, sad to say, by hanging, it came to light that the Home Office's principal forensic science laboratory at Aldermaston does not have a policy for dealing with HIV positive specimens

[Mr. Barry Field]

which are sent to it. I consider that that is a major omission in the campaign against AIDS and must raise some serious issues about undetected homicide. Of course, death in custody is a serious issue and we should always be sensitive in establishing its cause.

My hon. and learned Friend may tell me that these matters are not for him and his Department. I understand that the island's pathologist declined to carry out a post-mortem and that the director of the forensic science laboratory, Mr. Neylan, entered into quite considerable correspondence with the island's coroner. Mr. Neylan stated that whether samples sent to the laboratory would be analysed depended on a system of volunteers to carry out such work. To say the least, that is an extraordinary state of affairs. However, I take Mr. Neylan's point that, in having to deal with these samples, the individual staff are put at considerable risk over a much longer period than perhaps would normally be the case. It was summed up very well by the coroner when he said:

"My personal view of these matters is that it cannot be right to put a life at risk merely to discover why another life has expired."

That is probably a wise comment.

My hon. and learned Friend may suggest that these matters are not for him, but I draw his attention to one particular point. His Ministerial colleagues have a duty to discharge their responsibilities for the collection of information for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, and those duties include the registration of deaths and the analysis of the causes. I wonder how the Department can be discharging that duty if the principal authority required to look into the forensic medicine side of pathology is unable to deal regularly with the samples that are sent to it.

As I have said, my call for compulsory testing for AIDS in prisons was not a matter of censure. There are two separate categories of prisons. On the one hand, there is the high security prison, where the prisoner faces a long sentence with no chance of remission or returning to life in the normal world outside, and where feelings and tension can run high from time to time. On the other, there is the low security prison where there is a vast turnover of inmates, who include a high proportion of drug addicts and male prostitutes.

I sincerely believe that the psychological regime in our prisons would be considerably improved if there were a system of compulsory testing of prisoners for AIDS. In the tragic case to which I alluded, the coroner and the staff of the forensic science laboratory would have been in a better position to make a decision had they been able to refer to records, which had been available since the man first entered prison. For that reason I included in my manifesto the commitment for such testing, and I shall continue to campaign for it.

1.40 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I welcome the debate and I am pleased that the Government have responded favourably by calling it. I requested this debate on 1 December, AIDS Awareness Day. The Government missed the opportunity to use the House on that day to raise the profile of the problems of AIDS, but they have rectified that mistake today.

AIDS is a massive problem, and it will be the single biggest health problem that we face at the turn of the century. Many constructive speeches have been made today and, in common with other hon. Members, I acknowledge that the Government are trying to grope towards tackling some of the difficulties. There are, however, serious gaps in our response to AIDS.

My borough faces a problem because there are no genito-urinary clinics in Waltham Forest. The Minister has already referred to their importance. Because of the lack of such clinics, the number of people in Waltham Forest suffering from AIDS, or, more importantly, those who are HIV positive, is unknown. Because of the absence of those clinics, people are denied the confidentiality and anonymity that they desire before they take such a test. It also means that other sexually-transmitted diseases—for example, venereal disease—are not treated adequately.

Such a clinic is needed because it addresses individuals' fears and helps to allay them. There has been much pressure from the local authority and the community health council to establish a clinic in the borough. The district health authority has responded by saying that it has put in a bid to the North East Thames regional health authority for a clinic. I suspect, however, that the district health authority is using that bid as an excuse for lack of action. We are still awaiting a response from the regional health authority, but we have been waiting a long time. I hope that the Minister will pick up this point and tell the region to get on and supply that clinic. Such clinics are vital, not just to my borough, but to many others.

Testing for AIDS is available in my borough if it is requested by a general practitioner. Many people, however, do not want their GP to know and are worried if their GP finds out that they might be at risk. They cannot ask for an anonymous test because that facility is unavailable.

Waltham Forest borough has appointed an AIDS counsellor who can arrange for such a test. That person also provides counselling before and after the test, which is good. I suspect, however, that that counselling is not widely known about. The borough also employs a co-ordinator who gets the various council departments —housing, social services and environmental health—to work together. He has tried to chivvy up the district health authority. He also has an important training role.

Each AIDS case is expensive. I am told that in my borough the cost is £5,000 per case, and that excludes hospital costs, the costs of the AIDS counsellor and co-ordinator and of training. That is just the basic social services costs. I understand that the national figure is about £27,000. Yet Waltham Forest receives £50,000 from the Government—a small sum which is swallowed up in staffing and covers a bit of the training costs.

The Minister referred to a circular that he has issued and I was notified of the draft

"Social Services Specific Grant for services for people with AIDS and related expenditure, Financial Year 1989-90".

I understand that the Government are to provide £7 million to cover anticipated expenditure of £10 million. The remaining £3 million, which the councils must find for themselves, will be subject to all the restrictions of rate support grant cuts and penalties. That is a serious imposition on many London boroughs which are already suffering from problems.

What is worse, I understand that that £7 million will be allocated between two different categories, A and B.

Waltham Forest is left out of both categories and so is not eligible. That is most unfair and brings me back to the problem that we do not have a clinic. We cannot collect proper figures, so the Government have not included us in either category and we cannot get the money. I understand that some county councils which have reported fewer cases than Waltham Forest are in category B.

My borough is similar to many boroughs in category A, let alone category B. For example, Westminster and Hammersmith and Fulham are both in category A. Waltham Forest is also similar to Brent, Ealing, Haringey, Lewisham, and Southwark, which are in category B. As a result, whatever the council spends to deal with the problem will be subject to rate support cuts and penalties. Then the Prime Minister, Ministers at the Department of Health and the ranks of the Tory party will say that we are overspenders. I ask the Minister to consider that local aspect and to review the position.

Many hon. Members have talked about the spread of HIV and AIDS in prison, and rightly so because it spreads from prisons into society. It is a scandal that the Home Office has adopted such a blinkered approach to the problem. Sir Donald Acheson, the Government's chief medical officer, is reported as having said at a world conference on 22 February 1988:

"the possible spread of the virus within prisons and after the prisoner was released must be faced."

But apparently the Home Office does not feel that it must face the problem seriously.

We all know that transmission in prisons is mainly by drug misuse and shared needles and by sex with an infected person. A recent report stated that more than 4,000 prisoners who have been released are dependent on drugs, but recognised that the figure could be three times higher than that as many drug users are not in contact with the prison doctor. In 1987, the last year for which I have figures, syringes were found at 13 different prison establishments. In a reply to me, the Home Office stated that the needles were not normally tested for HIV. The Home Office does not want to know. Why not? Why were those needles not tested? The Home Office does not want to know the extent of the problem.

Prison authorities themselves use drugs extensively, often for control and restraint as well as for purely medical purposes. Those syringes could also escape into the prison community. The incidence of unofficial usage must also be recognised. A long-running experiment, carefully controlled and monitored, should be carried out, with clean needles being supplied to avoid shared use. Together with that, prisoners who want to get off drugs should be given counselling. The Home Office has shirked its duty in that respect.

The same applies to sexual transmission of AIDS. We all know that sexual activity occurs in prisons, whatever the rules say. Again, however, the Home Office turns a blind eye to the reality. Condoms are not supplied: they are regarded as contraband. But, as has been said, Spain, Bologna in Italy and New York all supply condoms in their prisons. That surely is a basic, first-step precaution against the spread of AIDS. A similar move in British gaols could be facilitated if, as is done in Spain and Italy, conjugal visits in private were allowed.

I think that the Home Office will eventually pay for its negligence. Sooner or later—if it has not happened already—a prisoner will catch AIDS in prison, and it will be provable. The court will consider the question of blame. Suppose a prisoner is raped and then catches AIDS. Prison is supposed to be protective custody, yet the negligence of prison authorities will be the issue when the case comes to court. They may well be sued in such cases.

It is not merely a question of money. Society will pay, because the virus will spread from prisons into the community as a whole. The Department of Health should start exerting some muscle over the Home Office. And it is not just the Home Office: many other Departments seem to run the Department of Health ragged on the issue. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office have a poor record on protection of the armed forces. It is a record of complacency. The Ministry of Defence has issued one poorly distributed leaflet to the armed forces. Some of our military personnel are posted in areas where HIV infection is widespread—as high as 70 per cent.—and where prostitution is rife. As far as I am aware, the Foreign Office has made virtually no representations to Governments where those troops are posted—Governments that deliberately cater for prostitution for foreign troops. The Department of Health should demand that the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence fall into line with precautionary measures.

The business travelling public are also at risk. While the Department of Trade and Industry can find £50 million for one privatisation project, it has done nothing to warn travelling business men about AIDS. The Department of the Environment keeps cutting local authorities' rate support grant, and that means cuts in care, including AIDS community care. Again the Department of Health has remained silent.

The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) made an excellent speech about Africa, where AIDS is wiping out communities. We live in a small world; that could affect this country. What are the Government doing about the debt problem? The World Bank has reported that, although the Third world paid the First world £43 billion net, because of compound interest it ended up £39 billion more in debt at the end of the year than it had been at the beginning. When countries are shackled like that, how can they tackle their enormous AIDS problem? The Department of Health has made no contribution towards solving it. For all its good efforts, and despite the fact that tentatively it is going in the right direction, the Department of Health is a wimp in its battles with other Departments. It should do something about it.

Sex education in schools should be compulsory so that the lives of our children can be protected. Serious consideration also needs to be given to the introduction of anti-discrimination laws over employment. The Government ought to establish a special insurance fund so that those who contract the HIV virus have access to mortgages. They have a right to be part of the home-owning democracy. They should not be prevented from owning their own homes because of insurance problems.

Community care, above all, is vital. It is right that people should be treated in their own homes. Treatment, however, involves back-up support—almost daily visits from health and social workers and home helps, as well as counselling for families and lovers. It is impossible to provide that support on current funding levels. The Government's dogmatic antipathy to local authorities, particularly Labour authorities that are doing their best to tackle the problem, is retrograde and adds to the problem, and AIDS victims suffer as a result.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

There is still a great deal that a responsible Government ought to do to counter the terrible spread of AIDS. If action is not taken, a large proportion of our young people will be wiped out.

1·57 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I can think of no area of public policy in respect of which any Government have reordered their priorities as swiftly as have this Government in the face of AIDS. There is a long way to go, but the Government have provided finance swiftly and have set in train a remarkable amount of research.

I have recently visited the poorest parts of Africa, as well as Latin America and Canada—always in connection with development, family planning or AIDS. I have reached two conclusions. The first is that the Government are handling the problem better than any other Government, particularly in helping people to cope with AIDS and in the effectiveness of their public education programme. Money has always been available. The problem has usually been a lack of people to use it. As our ability to use that money improves, more money must be forthcoming and I have no doubt that it will be made available.

Secondly, neither this country nor any other can afford to be xenophobic. AIDS is a pandemic problem. Its significance cannot be overstated. Politicians tend to hyperbole, but the danger on this occasion is that politicians throughout the world will not speak out. That danger is relevant to closed political systems, such as those in the Soviet Union and in China, where there have recently been unpleasant manifestations of xenophobia over overseas students.

The danger is not limited to developing countries with fragile democratic or other systems. It is a feature of the most sophisticated democracies, such as Canada. On a recent visit I was shocked to discover that there are still states in Canada that do not allow AIDS education to be provided in their schools. As a nation that still operates a comparatively open door immigration policy, Canada must face up to the prejudices about immigrants and all foreigners, because of the heightened fear of AIDS. However, it would be an error in Canada, in the United Kingdom or anywhere else to single out immigrants or overseas students. Statistically, their impact is vastly smaller than that of the millions of people who flood into and out of our airports, whether on business or on holiday. Can anyone seriously suggest that in current circumstances every one of those international travellers should be AIDS tested, with all the attendant problems, including the insurance implications?

The pandemic is in its early stages and no one is certain of the number of AIDS cases. The World Health Organisation estimates that there are more than 250,000 AIDS cases, but between 5 million and 10 million people worldwide are probably infected by the virus. Within the next five years, about 1 million new AIDS cases can be expected. The global situation will become much worse before it can be brought under control.

In its most recent publication the Panos Institute stated:

"In both its potential for destruction and the dilemmas it poses the HIV pandemic is in a league of its own."

There is no virus vaccine and the quarantine techniques that were used for controlling smallpox, which was eradicated in 1977, is of no use with AIDS because the incubation period is too long.

Poverty is probably the most important co-factor influencing the spread of the AIDS virus. Africa in particular has been afflicted simultaneously by HIV infection and unprecedented economic deterioration. With per capita income lower than in 1980, and a fall of 4 per cent. since 1986, the continent's debt is now three times greater than its export earnings, with no effective relief in sight. The falling prices for African exports have cost African countries nearly $50 billion since 1986.

According to leading British epidemiologists, between 11 and 20 per cent. of the general population of countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, and Angola and Somalia are HIV positive. Uganda has the highest reported HIV seroprevalence in Africa, reaching 80 per cent. in high risk groups, including prostitutes, blood recipients, patients with sexually transmitted diseases, the visitors of prostitutes, and partners of any of the above, between 61 and 90 per cent. of such people are HIV positive in Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Ruanda, and Burundi.

The computer modelling carried out by Professor Roy Anderson of Imperial college and his colleagues suggests that under certain conditions, over a period of decades, AIDS has greater potential to depress population growth rates in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South America than smallpox and bubonic plague in the past.

Therefore, the AIDS pandemic will mean that, even more than in our own country, there will be a huge reduction in the number of young economically productive men and women. That will have considerable economic and social effects on societies that already suffer mass poverty and death from hunger or from simple diseases related to undernourishment. In addition, the present period between infection and the development of AIDS —thought to be eight to nine years—will be reduced in developing countries where people are exposed more frequently to, and to a larger range of, infectious agents than are those in the developed world.

Experts argue that the focus on the number of AIDS cases rather than on the entire spectrum of HIV infection has distorted our understanding of the size of the epidemic. The collection of accurate data has been hindered by political and social sensitivities in developing countries, as well as by under-recognition, under-diagnosis and under-reporting. Experts say that although AIDS is unlikely to affect the ratio of dependants to non-dependants in such societies, the high predicted mortality of AIDS, which requires repeated hospitalisation, perhaps over a period of years, and which is thought to enhance morbidity due to other infections such as TB, will be devastating to already overloaded health care systems in poor countries.

It is impossible to imagine how such health care systems will cope. There is no vaccine in sight and the only hope for arresting the further spread of HIV is the development and forceful application of education programmes that are aimed at changing behaviour. So what are we doing about that in Britain? We are supporting a programme of research into the socio-economic aspects of AIDS. One study will investigate the future demographic and economic impact of the disease. Three others will

contribute to a better understanding of the social contexts which affect the transmission of the virus and the way in which communities cope with the consequences.

First, there is a project at Imperial college, London on the

"Analyses of the Demographic and Economic Impact of AIDS on Developing Countries."

It started in August 1987 and will be completed in July 1990. Another project on

"Community Coping Mechanisms in Circumstances of Exceptional Demographic Change."

is being carried out by the University of East Anglia. That started in November 1988 and will finish in February 1990. There are a further two projects on key issues in prevention. The first,

"A Review of Sources on Social Behaviour in Sub-Sahara Africa"

is being carried out by the Sussex university starting in October 1988 and finishing in March this year. Finally a very interesting study on

"Traditional Health Practitioners and the Spread of the HIV Virus in Sub-Saharan Africa"

is being carried out at Swansea university. That started in July last year and will finish in June this year. That is particularly interesting, because it will assess the methods used by traditional healers in providing health care services in terms of the transmission of the virus and in combating the spread of the disease. Traditional healers may be able to play an important role in campaigns to counter HIV transmission.

The Government have a very good record. The United Kingdom is the largest donor to the World Health Organisation global programme, providing £7·75 million. In addition, we are supporting national AIDS programmes. The United Kingdom contributes to the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Some £1·6 million goes towards helping its public education material. I have seen that operating in Nigeria and the Gambia. It is remarkable to see how effectively one can communicate in such countries and communities, and I commend the IPPF on its work. We also support the European Community AIDS programmes, and our health assistance programme of more than £40 million a year is designed to strengthen developing countries' health services in dealing with the disease.

We simply do not know what will be the economic impact in sub-Saharan Africa, but the United Kingdom has commissioned research which is so important. I listened with interest to what my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said about that. Two types of cost will be involved—the direct cost for prevention and patient care, and the indirect costs due to lost output. That is particularly difficult to quantify because we do not know the extent of the epidemic or its effect. Populations may alter significantly, but we do not yet know what will happen. The balance between economically active adults and the dependent young and old may not change because the number of deaths from AIDS among young children may be greater than we first thought and the balance may be relatively undisturbed.

There is much work to be done bilaterally. The Overseas Development Administration is concentrating bilateral assistance on three to five-year, medium-term national AIDS control plans in priority countries and £5·63 million has been pledged in support of programmes in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Our support is channelled through the World Health Organisation.

Many people are anxious that the money should be spent in the right way. I believe that it is. In the absence of a cure or vaccine, priority must be given to education and information. However, other priorities that the Government are addressing include protecting blood supplies, laboratory diagnosis, training and surveillance of the progress of AIDS. The Government also offer training on social aspects to developing countries in the form of a one-year post-graduate course leading to a PhD which will equip a person to return and work on the social impact of AIDS in his own country. It is surprising and unfortunate that very few candidates have come forward.

One of the most cynical proposals that I have heard is that we should reduce our overseas aid programme because the AIDS pandemic will eliminate the need for supporting overpopulation. But Malthus was always wrong and AIDS is not a Malthusian crisis. We should reject such arguments and I am very glad that this Government do so; the modest growth in the overseas aid budget next year underlines their commitment.

Above all we must continue to support family planning which brings enormous benefits to mothers and children particularly in developing countries. The idea of a spaced family in a healthy community is good for the menfolk too. I thank the condom manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies for their responsible attitude to the pandemic. I am sure that they have all contributed in their various ways. London International, the makers of Durex, gave substantial sponsorship to the world AIDS conference in this country last year and, together with Roche provided very helpful assistance to the all-party parliamentary group on AIDS.

Without a doubt the United Kingdom is the world leader in recognising and acting on the international dimension of AIDS and I congratulate the Government on that. I have a constituency interest because a great deal of AIDS work is conducted at the public health laboratory service at Porton Down and at its sister establishment in the Gambia. Also, after 40 years the common cold research unit at Salisbury is to shut down. It is a victim not of failure, but of its own success in pioneering work on virology. It is ironic that its distinguished staff, led by its internationally respected director, is putting behind it the impossible quest for a cold cure, but finds itself at the frontiers of knowledge about viruses with a crucial contribution to make in conquering the AIDS virus. The Medical Research Council and the Health Education Authority have also made remarkable efforts to combat AIDS.

This country led the world in public education through media campaigns and direct mail shots. Valuable innovative programmes are now being developed all over the world including in the developing countries. We should not be afraid to learn from them. In particular, there is a remarkable project in Jamaica which has successfully used calypso songs in its education. Of course education need not be drudgery.

Sexual taboos, customs and perceptions do not differ only between races, religions and cultures. Can any hon. Member deny that there are differences of attitude between a Londoner and a Glaswegian, a Yorkshireman and a Welshman, an Ulsterman and a man of Kent? The Government have already announced plans to encourage

[Mr. Robert Key]

local initiatives, but it would make good sense to develop far more public education resources at health authority level. Our district medical officers of health have already shown how they can respond positively. Doctor Armand-Smith of the Salisbury health authority has taken a national lead in many ways in developing local networks.

It is important that we all realise that AIDS is not a bleeding hearts issue. It is one of the toughest problems of the age. It knows no boundaries, but it still rates a low political and parliamentary priority. I noted that none of the hon. Members leading campaigns for or against amending the abortion legislation have been present in the Chamber today. This time next week the Chamber will be packed and the public will be queuing to get into the Public Gallery. Hon. Members will be bombarded with letters and will be lobbied mercilessly by people who feel passionately about abortion. If I am forced to abandon my constituency duties next week, I shall probably be here to vote down a business motion which I consider entirely inappropriate to furthering the cause of the preservation of life and I speak as a moderate supporter of the Bill to amend the abortion legislation. What a contrast next week's debate will be to today's debate, which is also about the preservation of life.

2.13 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), who has a specialist knowledge of this matter, which he has studied in great depth, for speeding his delivery to allow me to speak for a few moments.

AIDS is becoming a massive threat to life. At its present rate of increase, the number of cases is doubling every 14 months. As a cause of death in Britain, in 1991 it will overtake all other infectious diseases put together, in 1992 it will overtake road accidents, in 1993 it will overtake diabetes, in 1994 bronchitis and in 1995 pneumonia. At the present rate of increase, at some time in the first five years of the next century, it will even overtake cancer as a cause of death, but most of the deceased will be young.

The Minister reminded us earlier that, although AIDS has so far affected mainly homosexuals and drug addicts in Britain, that is not so in Africa. In France, and Belgium the rate of heterosexual infection is twice as great as in the United Kingdom. During last night's Adjournment debate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) spoke of prostitutes in Streatham who are infected with AIDS. All this tends to bear out the fact that the spread of this horrible disease between men and women is increasing.

I congratulate the Minister on the action that has been taken so far, in particular his announcement today. However, we must be more rigorous in finding out who is infected and then curtail their infection of others, whether by persuasion or compulsion. That is much more important than upholding traditional medical ethics, politeness or not hurting people's feelings. We should be motivated by compassion and we should show great compassion and care for those who are ill and soon to die. However, it is at least as important to show compassion to those who may catch the disease as to those who already have it because there are more of them and the disease is incurable.

In relation to AIDS, preventive medicine must be paramount. Blood tests for HIV infection should be stepped up. The Government should draw up a list of priorities. They could start with blood tests on anyone needing an operation on anyone entering hospital as a casualty and on anyone having their blood examined by a doctor for any purpose, including general medical check-ups. When anyone shows up as HIV positive or infected by AIDS after a random check, that information should be passed on. Those categories could later be extended.

Testing for AIDS, which is currently anonymous, should not be so. Doctors should be notified as to which of their patients have the disease and they should officially notify the relevant patients. It should be made a criminal offence for anyone who is knowingly HIV positive or who has AIDS to have sexual intercourse with anyone other than a person who is similarly infected. That may sound tough, but it has the sole object of controlling the spread of this appalling plague.

2.17 pm

Mr. Mellor: I apologise for the delay in my rising to my feet, but I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) was merely moving on to his next point. I am grateful to him for sitting down and giving me time to reply.

I hope that this debate has given those hon. Members who are most concerned about the issue the opportunity to state their views. I have a formidable list of points that have been made, only some of which, alas, I shall be able to deal with in the remaining time.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) for giving up her right to reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady does not have such a right.

Mr. Mellor: In that case, I plead guilty to an excess of chivalry. I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your firm and guiding hand on our deliberations. I have the right to speak a second time, though some hon. Members might have wished it otherwise.

I shall deal with some of the points raised and I shall write to the hon. Members concerned about any significant points with which I do not have time to deal. If any hon. Members are still worried that points might remain unanswered, they should let me know.

This has been an enjoyable debate. All hon. Members appreciate the significance of the problem and most were kind enough to suggest, as is only fair, that the Government have made a serious and sustained effort to come to grips with it. Everyone, including myself, has said that more needs to be done. The worst possible case for a Minister in an issue such as this is to be defensive about what has been achieved and what remains to be achieved. We have sought to improve facilities and to gear ourselves up to action in line with the growth of the problem. We have, for example, doubled the resources specifically aimed at AIDS, although that underestimates the full extent of activity.

Year after year, as the problem grows, far more resources will have to be devoted to AIDS. I say to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that one of the key points is to have the best possible data with which we can go to the Treasury about

resources for the Health Service, for example, and social services in the community. We accept the Cox report as the planning base and we shall rely each year on information for determining what more needs to be done. Data is a management tool and we intend to use it as such.

I enjoyed much of the speech made by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams). We shall not take the view that the notional budget for the Medical Research Council for 1992 is the final figure. Such matters are kept continually under review and I can assure him that if people from such bodies come forward with credible research proposals there is no question of our saying, "Sorry, that is important work but we don't have the money to do it". Our commitment to AIDS research is such that such valuable work as can be done in this country is being done.

I can agree with much of what was said by the hon. Member for Peckham. However, I must say again, en passant, that these debates—and I hope that there will be more of them—would be better if she could purge what she said of one or two points that strike me as being geared more to twisting a knife in the innards of the Government than to shedding light on the topic. We have enough issues on which to be partisan without having to include this one.

I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). Hon. Members should not be partisan, but the Government must not describe every call for improvements or every suggestion of underfunding as partisan. The hon. Lady should reflect on the fact that, although she spoke of the Government feeding a witch hunt on AIDS, no one else has associated themselves with that comment and there is no question of it being true.

I can join the hon. Lady in identifying certain priorities. I, too, deplore the inaccurate press article that she mentioned. I agree that it is important to have proper education about a healthy lifestyle—which must include knowledge about AIDS—in schools. Although that decision lies primarily with the boards of governors, we are doing everything in our power, through the distribution of information packs, the Health Education Authority and the provision of an expert co-ordinator in every education authority, to ensure that the information is put across.

The hon. Lady referred to section 28. Whatever controversy remains on it, the hon. Lady must know that an amendment was accepted to ensure that anything done in schools for the purposes of treating or preventing the spread of disease was not stopped and AIDS was one of the prominent reasons why that was done. The hon. Lady asked about the £131 million. Yes, that is fresh money over and above the amount that the National Health Service asked for specifically, justified to the Treasury and would have received on the basis of the growing threat of AIDS. It would be unacceptable to expect district and regional health authorities—given, especially, how disproportionately the burden falls on certain authorities, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) made clear—to pick up the burden without additional, specified funding. We have put in a bid and obtained for next year double the amount spent this year and we are allocating it as fairly as we can.

The hon. Member for Peckham raised the question of fairness of allocation. This year, the health boards in Scotland have received what they asked for and we know that the provision for England will be doubled, as I said to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East. No regional health authority in England has told us that it thinks that the allocation is unfair. Were any to do so, we would consider the matter.

The latest figures that I have show that Lothian health board received £2 million this year in AIDS-related moneys and has 20 full-blown AIDS patients. I do not think that dividing the number of AIDS patients by the amount of money is the best guide to adequacy of funding —there is more to it than that—but that rather crude calculation comes out at £100,000 per patient in Lothian. That figure does not sit too badly with those that the hon. Member for Peckham gave for England. I am anxious, however, not to make debating points, but rather to make points of substance.

It is plain that regard must be had to the provision of housing for people who suffer from AIDS. It is clear that there must be an expansion in community care. We have given assistance to that end through a range of specific sums and also through social work training. During the past 12 months, we have announced grants for social work training. My door is always open to people who want to present ideas for other help that we can provide.

I am convinced that, year on year, a lot more will have to be done. We must evaluate the needle exchange scheme. On a personal note, I am glad, as an advocate of that scheme from the outset, that the report seems to justify many of the views that I held when I was doing the drugs brief at the Home Office. I am glad to see that there have been developments to meet some of the points of which I have been advised and which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East raised in relation to Scotland.

I understand, for example, that, on 22 December, the Scottish Office announced approval for Lothian health board to extend its needle and syringe exchange facilities. I strongly welcome that. I understand that the Scottish Office has also told health boards that it is prepared to consider any specific proposals for setting up further schemes or extending existing ones. I also understand that work is in hand in regard to drug dependency services in Edinburgh.

I shall draw the attention of my colleague in the Scottish Office to the hon. Members' remarks about the Scottish dimension. I still carry with me, from when I started in the drugs job back in 1983, concern about the problems of sharing equipment in Edinburgh and the message it holds for the rest of us in terms of the virus's ability to spread not just into the drug dependent, community but out, through sexual relations, into the rest of the community and, most horrendous of all, to children.

I strongly agree with the hon. Member for Peckham that it is appalling if children born with the AIDS virus have to live in an institution. We are committed to the idea that such children should be fostered or, if possible, adopted. I hope that the closer one examines that matter the less division there is between us.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East mentioned the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 reports. The 1988 reports differed widely in content and format, and so were less useful for national monitoring than is desirable. We aim next year to make them more uniform and to integrate them into NHS planning. If the hon. Gentleman has any further thoughts on that, I should be glad to hear from him.

I very much appreciate the thoughtful and, as ever, distinguished speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving). We know that when he says

[Mr. Mellor]

something nice he really means it. One cannot say that of everybody in this place. I was therefore pleased about what he said about my contribution. I have taken serious account of what he said about prisons. Several other hon. Members also spoke about prisons. I shall ensure that the Home Office is made aware of the views that have been expressed.

I share the frustration felt by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the funding of voluntary organisations. I have shared that frustration ever since I have been a Minister. I have not yet found the answer, but that does not mean that I am giving up. He is right to emphasise, time and again, how vital is the work of groups such as the Terrence Higgins Trust. They reach out into communities that Ministers and others cannot reach.

That is why we have provided £400,000 for them this year. It is also why we accept that, from time to time, they will want to spur us on or say that we have got it wrong. I have visited the Terrence Higgins Trust, and I strongly and warmly commend what it does.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) spoke about London Lighthouse. I, too, have visited that tremendous facility. I suspect that we shall have to have more like it. We put £1·25 million into the capital for it. When I was there, I asked the staff about how soon all the beds would be filled. I was told that they were seeking gradually to bring it in and to commission it; they cannot do it all at once. I have not heard from them, but I would like to be sure that they will write in and let us know if there are any specific problems. My hon. Friend, who always speaks so authoritatively on these matters, also mentioned the advisory council's report.

Time has forced me to omit mention of some matters. Hon. Members might have thought that my speech could not have been any longer, but it could have been. One of the points that I left out was——

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 19th January, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), if proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Ridley relating to Local Government Finance have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put successively the Questions thereon; and proceedings in pursuance of this Order, though opposed, may be decided after the expiration of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 84 (Constitution of standing committees) and the action taken with regard to the allocation of the Bill, and Standing Order No. 95 (Scottish Standing Committees), the Transport (Scotland) Bill though not certified as relating exclusively to Scotland shall be considered by the First Scottish Standing Committee; and that subject to Standing Order No. 85 (Chairmen of standing committees) and paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), the Members nominated to serve on that Committee by the Committee of Selection in respect of the Bill shall be Members of the Committee in respect thereof and the Members appointed by Mr. Speaker shall be Chairmen thereof.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered.

That Mr. Henry McLeish and Marjorie Mowlam be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Jeff Rooker and Dr. John Reid be added to the Committee. —*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to be misunderstood, but Fridays are private Members' days. In today's debate, which had great relevance, the two Front Bench spokesmen spoke for one hour and six minutes. As a result, many hon. Members were not able to be called or had to curtail their remarks. I register the fact that Back Benchers surely have their rights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those hon. Members who sought to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair were successful in taking part in the debate. I do not know whether their remarks were curtailed. I hope that Front Bench spokesmen on both sides of the House, particularly Ministers, will have regard to what has been said. The hon. Gentleman reflects a complaint that has been made privately or openly on more than one occasion.

Homelessness (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): One of the problems in a short Adjournment debate on this subject is the sheer weight of evidence which demonstrates the enormous growth of homelessness, however that is defined, since 1979. Reports abound, and I shall refer to some a little later. Evidence from impartial sources exists by the cartload for anyone who wishes to read it. Unfortunately, the Government largely ignore that information.

I could be accused of many things, but I think that being a fool is not one of them. I realise that rational arguments in this place have no real influence on the Government. But, if I am not a fool, I am an optimist —an optimist against all the odds and, I fear, the evidence. I stand here today as a living embodiment of hopes, foolishness, hoping that, for once, the Minister will throw away the Central Office-inspired departmental brief to which he will refer later and let his heart and compassion hold sway on the crucial subject of homelessness in London—if, indeed, heart and compassion have not become indictable offences in today's Tory party.

The statistics regarding homelessness in London, as elsewhere, are stark, although figures can never do justice to the depth of misery and hopelessness that they portray. In London today, there are 21,000 households, placed by local authorities in temporary accommodation, waiting for a permanent council home—an increase from just 2,500 in 1981. Also, 29,500 homeless families are accepted by councils as in priority need. In 1979, it was less than half that figure. More than 7,000 families are placed by London councils in bed and breakfast hotels. In June 1981, the total was only 900. In my borough of Newham, the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation stood at 557 in December. Bed and breakfast costs for my borough in 1983-84 amounted to £52,000 a year. In 1987-88, they amounted to £5·5 million a year.

Most council lettings now go to the homeless. The figure has grown from 31 per cent. to 57 per cent. since 1981, while the total number of lettings has fallen. In Greenwich, Bromley and Brent the figure is more than 80 per cent. In some London councils the shortage of homes is so acute that the number of people housed from the waiting list each year has shrunk to single figures. The number of homeless families accepted each year in London has been greater than the number of new council lettings for the past two years, and council lettings have fallen dramatically since 1981. That means that even if councils ignored the pressing needs of people on the waiting list, however ill, and the need to move people from estates that are being modernised, and left everyone in temporary accommodation, there would still not be enough council homes to accommodate those with a right to be housed.

In addition, more than 60,000 people in London are not included in the figures that I have given so far. They, unlike some of those whom I mentioned in the previous statistics, have no chance of a council home—now or in the future. They are the single homeless. It is estimated that 2,000 people sleep rough in central London, 30,000 are squatting, 15,000 are in short-life properties in bad conditions, 10,000 are in direct access hostels and night shelters, and 7,500 are in bed-and-breakfast hotels in central London—a staggering total of 64,000 people with no homes now or in the future.

The Government's response to all this weight of evidence has been to ignore it or to attack Labour local authorities in London for the alleged extent of their vacant properties and rent arrears. A regular battle has gone on in the House between Government propaganda and the facts. As so often in this place, the propaganda wins—but the facts tell a very different story.

The overall level of council-owned empty properties in London fell again in the year to 1 April 1988, from 27,000 to 23,000—a 15 per cent. drop. In contrast, the boroughs report that the position in the private sector remains the same. The number of empty properties there has remained at a massive 97,000 or thereabouts for the past three years. London councils maintained their record of having the lowest proportions of empty homes—3 per cent. of council homes are vacant, compared with 3·6 per cent. of housing association stock, 5 per cent. of stock owned by other public landlords, including Departments of State, and 5 per cent. of privately owned homes.

These figures come from the annual submissions made to the Department of the Environment for capital resource purposes. Although they provide only a snapshot of the position of housing stock they are a useful indicator of general trends. In case the Minister starts talking about the voids in the London borough of Newham, let me make it clear that the housing investment programme returns that I have show 1,921 voids in Newham. From that number must be deducted the units awaiting demolition, the decanting from the TWA tower blocks in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and other structurally unsound blocks in the borough. So the net void level in Newham is 805—2·7 per cent. of Newham's housing stock. I hope that the Minister will realise that that is the truth and not keep repeating the accusation regularly made from the Dispatch Box that Newham has one of the highest void levels in the whole country.

So often, Ministers in this place take the crude total of households in bed and breakfast and compare it with total local authority empty homes. That is a fatuous and grossly misleading comparison. Not all empty homes are available for letting, as the Minister knows. Some are being let as we debate today; some are awaiting repair, demolition or sale. To make such a crude comparison is as silly as Lord Caithness saying on radio yesterday that the number of dwellings in the United Kingdom equalled the number of families. Such comparisons are meaningless and are no more than cheap debating points.

Similarly, the Government use rent arrears as a crude measure of council managerial efficiency. Local authorities in London have made great efforts to reduce arrears. They must do more. I tell the Minister that the three hon. Members who represent Newham meet the council leadership every month and press it to ensure that the council catches up with rent arrears as much as possible and that empty properties are made available to those who need them. We need no lessons on pressuring our local authorities in London.

The Minister must also realise that most rent arrears are brought about by the financial problems of tenants, not by council inefficiency. Councils' efforts to reduce arrears have been wholly undermined by the Government's social security changes. In April, the

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Government slashed £650 million from the housing benefit budget. Nationally, that meant that a million people were forced out of the benefit system altogether. The Association of London Authorities gave me figures for Brent which showed that before April the number receiving housing benefit amounted to 31,000, but that is now down to 23,000. In Southwark, before the April changes, 27,000 council tenants were receiving housing benefit, but that is now down to some 22,000. Those are two of London's poorest areas. The Minister surely must have seen the Association of Metropolitan Authorities' which revealed a 37·5 per cent. average increase in rent arrears since those housing benefit changes in April. The survey covered all authorities—Tory, Labour, Liberal and all other categories.

The category of person hit hardest by those changes has been the single homeless—those for whom no authority has any statutory responsibility. Grants are no longer available to assist people to book themselves into bed and breakfast accommodation—instead they can only apply for a discretionary loan. Supplementary benefit paid in advance has been replaced by income support payable two weeks in arrears. Consequently, people do not have the money to obtain bed and breakfast accommodation or the cash to pay rent for the first two weeks. Voluntary agencies in London, such as the Central London Social Security Advisory Forum, have found that most now are being forced to sleep rough in London's streets. That is an indictment of this country, the Government and our system.

I hope that the Minister has had an opportunity to read the book entitled "True Horror Stories" because it gives the real details. The Minister does not have to take these facts from me—I accept that I am politically biased—but the authors are people who work with the single homeless and can tell the Minister the extent and growing urgency of the problem in London. Those problems of homelessness have been created directly by Government policies—policies which to us seem deliberately designed to harass and intimidate the poor, the vulnerable and the weak.

One does not need to have the gift of second sight to understand the true nature of the present housing crisis in London and elsewhere. It has been caused by a Government who refuse to allow a long-term role for public sector housing. Before the advent of the small-minded, ideological bigotry known as Thatcherism, there existed a political consensus on the central role of the public sector in the provision of affordable rented accommodation. That consensus has now been destroyed, together with the hopes of so many of those who are homeless or living in substandard accommodation. Again, the facts are simple and straightforward and well within the grasp of even the thickest Tory Back Bencher.

In the 1970s, London boroughs were constructing about 25,000 new homes a year—that is now down to 2,000. The Government force local authorites to sell their housing stock and, as a result, 100,000 council units have been sold in London since 1979, but fewer than 30,000 have been added to the stock. Nowadays there is no incentive for councils to build, but if they try to do so the Government cut that off, too, by cutting the housing investment programme allocations. They have done that in London by a further 26 per cent. for 1989-90, which means that the housing investment programme has been slashed in real terms by 86 per cent. since 1979. One does not need a PhD in housing to understand why we have a housing crisis in London and in this country.

The Government say, as they always do, that the market will provide. Market forces might be efficient enough in the provision of cars, electrical equipment or soapflakes, but they are neither efficient nor just in the provision of housing. They never were and they never can be. The Government are relentless in their determination to force people into the hands of private landlords and owner-occupation. The result is a mounting housing crisis caused by policies based on crude ideology rather than on any rational assessment of the housing need and how to meet it.

There is little long-term comfort for those private tenants in London today facing market rents or, indeed, owner-occupiers facing mortgage repayments hiked up by the Chancellor's interest rate increases. Having listened to the Chancellor talking about the Autumn Statement yesterday, I fully expect him during the year try to remove mortgage payments from retail price index calculations. Before that happens, I expect repossessions through mortgage default to rise dramatically during 1989. Court orders for repossessions in London rose from 1,990 in 1980 to 4,723 in 1987. In England and Wales the figure went up from 16,120 to 49,000 in the same period. That is a fairly dramatic increase, but I am afraid that we have seen nothing yet.

Repossessions are now set to go much higher as many owner occupiers are faced with the annual revision of their mortgage repayments. I believe that local authorities should be allowed to assist those in arrears with their mortgage repayments and make a charge upon the property for doing so. I believe that building societies and banks should consider offering a shared ownership scheme whereby they take back the property and then re-offer it to the original owner on a part-rent part-mortgage basis. Obviously, I believe that they should offer concessionary rates to those who are in difficulties with their mortgage repayments.

I know that many building societies are holding back from repossession at the moment because of the scandal and embarrassment that it would cause for them and for the Government. The Minister should note, however, that it is the insurance companies which give top-up mortgages that are foreclosing on people, so the problem will come to the surface fairly swiftly.

Mortgage lenders should be required to provide money advice initiatives rather like the debt-line service offered by the Shelter Housing Advisory Committee in my constituency. I understand that at present that is the only debt advisory service in London. The mortgage lenders should face up to their responsibilities, because in many cases, they have forced people, with the encouragement of the Government, to overreach themselves. They cannot now walk away from their responsibilities and say that it is all down to the local authorities to mop up the mess. We are aware, however, that it is cheaper to build new homes or take over mortgages than to put people into bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

It would be inequitable to be concerned only with owner-occupiers and ignore the desperate plight of many council and private tenants facing rent arrears. In the end the only conclusion, which surely the Minister must

accept, is that we need to have a supply of affordable accommodation provided in all forms of tenure. If the Government were really concerned about homelessness and the housing crisis they would restore housing benefit levels and throw into reverse all the social security changes that have exacerbated the housing problems of the old, the single homeless and the poor. Above all, they would enter into a partnership with local authorities, building societies, housing associations and the private sector to construct homes in sufficient quantities, in all forms of tenure, at prices affordable at all income levels.

In 1989 it is a scandal that the right to a decent home is not given to everyone in this country. We have the wealth, the expertise and the land, but we lack the political will by by the Government to eliminate homelessness from our country.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), for providing the opportunity for a debate on this topic. Although nationally and in London the numbers of people accepted as homeless under the Housing Act 1985 continue to give great cause for concern, I consider that there are ways of alleviating the high social and financial cost of homelessness.

The numbers of homeless appear, recently, to be levelling off and the great majority were never physically without a home. They were found permanent accommodation, albeit at the expense of others on council waiting lists, but in less housing need. The high numbers reflect, in part, underlying social changes and problems, for example, relationship breakdown—this country's divorce rate is now the second highest in Europe—and young people tending to leave the family home earlier.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government's primary responsibility in this area lies in providing the appropriate legislative framework and in making resources available to local authorities to assist them in the provision of housing in their area. This includes their statutory duties under the Housing Act 1985 to help all those who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, and who apply to them for assistance.

The Government fully recognise the very great problem of homelessness. That concern is reflected not only in main housing allocations, which I will come to later, but in the allocation of an extra £74 million additional resources since November, 1987—of which nearly £38 million has been made available to London boroughs—targeted specifically on authorities bearing the brunt of this problem. In London alone this is expected to bring about the reinstatement of more than 2,500 local authority and housing association units and the creation of 800 new hostel bed spaces. The Government are also taking action on a number of fronts to help deal with homelessness.

Accusations are frequently made that the new Housing Act ignores the homeless. That is wrong. The whole thrust of our strategy is to increase choice to all income groups. The hon. Gentleman asked for mixed housing, and that is precisely what we intend to provide. The measures in the 1980 Act laid the foundation stones for that.

First, the Act revitalised the moribund private rented sector and enhanced the role of housing associations and the new housing action trusts. To allow tenants greater freedom of access to new and alternative landlords will, in addition, bring more choice into the housing market, allowing a better match between tenant and landlord. We have introduced assured tenancies and amended the rules on shorthold—fair rent tenancies in the private rented sector to encourage more private landlords to come forward and thus increase the supply of private rented accommodation available. In 1914 about 90 per cent. of the housing stock in England and Wales was rented from a private landlord. By 1938 the percentage had dropped to 58 per cent. Now it stands at a paltry 8 per cent. Private lettings account for over 30 per cent. of the housing stock in France and over 40 per cent. in Germany. Our housing association movement is central to our new policies since it will be the main provider of additional social housing in the future and is expected to play a major role in tenants' choice. Where tenants' choice transfers take place, local authorities will be able to negotiate nomination rights and, where appropriate, special arrangements for homelessness applicants, with the new landlord as part of the transfer agreement.

The tenants' guarantee will make clear to all approved landlords the responsibilities that they have in helping local authorities meet their statutory obligations on homelessness. HATs will also be able to make a contribution in this area by bringing empty council properties back into use. As major landlords in their designated areas, HATs will be well placed to help the local authority find accommodation for the homeless and to enter into agreements over nominations to HAT dwellings. Housing associations have for years shown the way in helping low-income groups. With the additional resources now available to them, they will be able to offer a wider choice and greater help to local authorities in meeting their statutory obligations to the homeless. In any case, London boroughs are likely to remain as important housing managers at least for the foreseeable future. Their role will be recognised and supported until an alternative system is in place.

Secondly, the Housing Act 1988 also provided the financial basis for a major expansion of the housing association movement. The restructuring of the housing association grant system from April 1989 will allow the maximum use of private finance to supplement available public resources and will make it possible for housing associations to expand significantly their housing programmes.

Thirdly, we are also reviewing the legislation on homelessness in order to ensure that priority on housing is given to those in greatest need, although as yet we are not able to put forward proposals. I am still awaiting sight of the Audit Commission report.

Within the total resources available to them, local authorities set their own priorities for dealing with their housing problems, including homelessness. On 1 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that gross provision for capital expenditure by local authorities on housing in 1989-90 would be 13·5 per cent. higher than previously planned. That was the fourth successive year in which it has been possible to increase provision, thanks to the continuing success of our right-to-buy policy. Through the receipts which that provides, local authorities have a growing source of spending power to supplement their capital borrowing. Within these overall resources, local authorities will continue to set their priorities for housing

[Mr. David Trippier]

in their areas, but, where appropriate, I would expect them to continue to give a high priority to the needs of the homeless.

I announced on 14 December 1988 that allocations to local authorities through the Department's Estate Action programme for schemes to improve the management and physical conditions of run-down local authority estates would again be increased. The increase is 36 per cent., to £190 million. The extra resources offered through Estate Action, among other things, assist in bringing empty properties on estates back into use to help the homeless. Nine such London schemes have received assistance so far. The hon. Member for Newham, North West will be aware that his own London borough of Newham has featured notably, and I am glad about that.

In the current year, as well as a basic allocation of £372 million of housing investment resources, the London boroughs will benefit from an addition of £30 million of Estate Action resources. In addition to that borrowing power, London boroughs will be able to supplement their HIP allocations by using capital receipts to an estimated amount of just over £600 million, producing an overall spending power of about £1,060 million.

My right hon. Friend announced on 1 November that gross provision for the Housing Corporation would rise substantially over the next three years: £815 million in 1989-90, £1,036 million in 1990-91 and £1,328 million in 1991-92. Gross expenditure by the Housing Corporation by 1991-92 is planned to be 80 per cent. above the original provision for 1988-89. The corporation's approved programme for next year and provisional plans for the following two years, which I announced on 14 December, should ensure a substantial increase in the provision of houses for rent.

The Housing Corporation allocations are concentrated on housing stress areas located mainly in inner cities, including at least £169 million this year for the 21 stress areas in London. The corporation's priorities include the relief of homelessness, and about a quarter of this year's rented housing programme was allocated for that purpose. Housing associations, especially in areas of serious homelessness, are expected to submit schemes aimed specifically at alleviating those problems. In addition, at my request, the corporation will encourage associations to examine their lettings policy to ensure that priority is given to those in the greatest housing need, especially the homeless, and also to ensure that there is effective liaison at local level with the housing departments of local authorities.

Inevitably there is another side to the balance sheet: the efficiency and effectiveness with which the available resources are being used. In our view, local authorities should make better use of existing stock. It cannot be right to keep homeless families in bed and breakfast hotels while council stock stands empty. The level of void properties in London remains unacceptable, as does the scale of rent arrears owing to London boroughs.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend gave the facts.

Mr. Trippier: If the hon. Gentleman had listened carefully to what his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West was saying, he would have heard him admit that the figures were improving. He seemed rather pleased about it. I spend a disproportionate amount of my time speaking to Labour-controlled local authorities, which are constantly trying to impress upon me that their record in turning around the number of voids is improving. In a number of cases it is, but in some it is unacceptable. I draw evidence from the last Audit Commission report, which made it clear that a turn-around time of some two and half weeks would bring a net increase of 20,000 homes on to the market. Of course the hon. Member for Newham, North-West and I are pleased that the position is improving; the point that I am making is that there is still some way to go.

In April 1988 there were 103,000 empty council dwellings nationally, 27,000 of which were in London, representing a small net reduction on previous years. Many could be brought back into use quickly through a programme of basic repairs and—as I have said—through improved re-letting rates. More than 8,500 dwellings had been empty for more than a year. That figure is higher than the 7,800 representing families in bed and breakfast in London at the end of September 1988.

In addition to the voids, there is evidence that up to 10 per cent. of council dwellings in inner London may contain unauthorised occupants. Almost certainly those people are in less urgent housing need than those in bed and breakfast accommodation. It is not good enough for local authorities to be unaware who occupies their stock, and to allow malpractices such as the sale of keys. The oft-quoted but stark figure from the Audit Commission's study of local authority housing management, which I have just released to the House, would mean that a considerable number of houses would be brought on to the market, which would be generally welcomed and would alleviate the problem of homelessness with which we are all familiar.

There is, in our view, no single or simple solution to the problem of homelessness. I have explained the ways in which the Government are taking action. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are reviewing the position. However, the key to reducing homelessness in London generally lies with local authorities and the optimum use that they can make of their existing housing resources.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 December 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Visits

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Prime Minister how many official visits she made to Scotland in each year from 1979 to 1988.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

	Number
1979	2
1980	2
1981	2
1982	3
1983	2
1984	1
1985	1
1986	3
1987	2
[1]1988	5

[1] To date.

Meetings

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Prime Minister if, on her next meeting with President-elect George Bush she will give him a report on the meeting between the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) and Bassam Abu Sharif of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The Prime Minister: No. But I expect that the Arab-Israel question will be among the topics for discussion when I next meet Mr. Bush.

White Papers

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all the White Papers produced by the Government since 1979.

The Prime Minister: A list of Command Papers from May 1979, which includes White Papers, is held on POLIS in the House of Commons Library.

Armenia

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will accept an offer from the Royal College of Art to assemble a small architectural planning team for Armenia; and if she will inform the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of this voluntary project.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the Royal College of Art for its offer of help, which we shall pass on to the Soviet authorities.

Economic Regions

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister is responsible for determining the boundaries of economic regions; how often these boundaries are reviewed; and by what process and criteria they are reviewed.

The Prime Minister: There is no longer a single set of planning regions for economic purposes although for statistical purposes such as *Regional Trends* we adopt a standard presentation for all subjects.

Special Needs Housing

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set up an interdepartmental review of the funding of special needs housing.

The Prime Minister: There is already adequate and continuous discussion of these issues between the responsible Departments.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will specify the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half year ending 31 December 1988 of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic or artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax or capital transfer tax, together with information, where applicable, as to conditions or wishes expressed in the matter of allocation by testators, or executors; whether he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of inheritance tax or capital transfer tax; and whether he will issue a press notice covering the information given in his reply.

Mr. Luce: The information is as follows:

Items allocated since 1 July 1988

Item	*Conditions or wishes expressed*	*Recipient institution*
Print by William Blake	Conditional	Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge
Two paintings by William Hogarth	None	National Museum of Wales
	Item awaiting allocation	

Item	Conditions or wishes expressed	Date of acceptance
Flower painting by Jacob Marrel	None	9 May 1988

A press notice is being issued.

Museums and Galleries (Attendances)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1988 reported by the national museums and galleries in England for which he is responsible, broken down into the individual institutions, including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage change on the attendance figures for 1987.

Mr. Luce: The information on attendance figures for 1988 will not be available until the new year.

Works of Art (Export Licences)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the items for which export licences were withheld on the recommendation of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art during the half year ended 31 December 1988, specifying in each case the valuation and whether an item was eventually exported or retained, with particulars in the latter event of the acquiring institution; whether he will list any items for which licences have been withheld but the final disposal of which is not yet decided, specifying in each case *(a)* the valuation and *(b)* the relevant time limit; and whether he will issue a press notice covering the information in his reply.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry accepted my recommendation following consideration by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to defer for the period specified a decision on an export licence application in respect of the items listed. The valuation has been omitted in one case where the owner wished it to remain confidential. Details of the items listed were given in press notices issued at the time the Secretary of State decided to accept the recommendation; however, a further press notice will be issued.

Description of item	Valuation £	Outcome
A portrait of "Sir Joseph Banks" by Benjamin West	1,922,250	Decision deferred for 6 months until 1 June 1989
A rare signed Cameo plaque "The Pearl Necklace" by George Woodall	20,240	Decision deferred for 3 months until 31 January 1989
A Dutch ewer and basin by Christian Van Vianen	—	Decision deferred for 6 months until 22 January 1989
A Roman bronze mask of Silenus	55,000	Decision deferred for 3 months until 24 January 1989
A pair of George II black and gold lacquer open armchairs	111,500	Decision deferred for 3 months until 24 January 1989
A white marble relief "Dido" attributed to Antonio Lambardo	650,000	Decision deferred for 4 months until 1 April 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

United Kingdom-Soviet Relations

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent the further education sector is preparing for closer and better relations between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union; what resources are being devoted to that end; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: A number of specific objectives have developed from my right hon. Friend's recent visit to the USSR against the background of the long-standing scientific, educational and cultural agreement between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and the growing independent links between British and Soviet universities and other educational establishments.

The implementation of the cultural agreement and the encouragement of independent links rests with the British Council. Existing activities include encouraging links between institutions for the direct exchange of staff and students and providing for British undergraduate students to study in the Soviet Union, for Soviet teachers to study in Britain, for exchanges of lecturers, and for visits by senior academics, researchers and postgraduate scholars. It is proposed to increase the Council's budget for co-operation with the Soviet Union generally. If approved, a proportion of the additional funds will be used to strengthen activity in further and higher education, but it is not possible at this stage to say what those additional resources will be.

In addition, the University Grants Committee is to set up an inquiry into the current and future provision of Soviet and East European studies in this country.

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December at columns 1080-81.

School Meals (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, how many children took school meals in Bradford for each year since 1975; and in each case how many children were taking free meals and how many were paying for their meals.

Mr. Butcher: The information is not available in the precise form requested, but the table shows the number of pupils taking school meals in primary, secondary and special schools in Bradford on the day of the annual school meals census in each year since 1975. In each case it also shows how many children were taking free meals on the day of the census and how many were taking paid meals.

Year	*Free*	*Paid*	*Total*
1975	9,935	43,979	53,914
1976	11,253	43,641	54,894
1977	13,227	37,558	50,785
1978	15,818	37,355	53,173
1979	14,002	37,038	51,040
1980	12,826	28,948	41,774
1981	16,442	26,875	43,317
1982	20,076	25,585	45,661
1983	22,741	25,051	47,792
1984	23,116	21,437	44,553
1985	N/A	N/A	N/A
1986	28,818	21,990	50,808
1987	23,336	18,130	41,466

Smoking

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that children in schools are protected from the effects of passive smoking and from the influence of seeing their teachers smoke; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that, in order to protect children from the effects of passive smoking and from the influence of seeing adults smoke around them, all school buses are smoke-free; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no powers to prohibit smoking either on school premises or on school buses. These are matters for the local education authority or the individual school to consider and decide upon.

Willowbrook School

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the purpose of the recent visit of Her Majesty's inspector of schools to Willowbrook primary school, Thurnby Lodge, Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The district inspector for Leicestershire has general responsibility for all schools in the local education authority, and visited Willowbrook school recently as part of his routine programme of pastoral visiting.

Mathematics and Science

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will respond to the National Curriculum Council's reports published on 5 December on his proposals for mathematics and science 5 to 16 in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have accepted in full the advice set out in the National Curriculum Council's reports on mathematics and science. In the light of this, and of the results of the consultation which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has carried out in Wales, we are today publishing draft orders and draft associated documents for attainment targets and programmes of study for mathematics and science, in accordance with section 4(2)(a), (b) and (4) of the Education Reform Act 1988. In accordance with section 20(5) of the Act, I shall be consulting all persons who were formally consulted by the National Curriculum Council on our proposals for mathematics and science. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be making the required arrangements for consultation in Wales. Copies of the draft orders and the associated documents have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ILEA (Expenditure)

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decision he has taken on the application from the Inner London education authority for redetermination of the expenditure level for 1989-90 which he set in July; and what maximum he proposes to prescribe for the Inner London education authority's precept in that year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Having considered the Inner London education authority's application, I have decided to redetermine the expenditure level for 1989-90 at £950 million, £10 million higher than the level I set in July. In coming to this decision, I have taken into account the authority's representations about the particular circumstances of its last year of operation. I have today notified the authority of this decision.

I have also notified it of my proposal to prescribe a maximum precept for 1989-90 of 77·61p which would, on the latest information available, enable the authority to raise £950 million. The proposed precept maximum is 4·19p less than the current year's precept—a reduction of 5·1 per cent. I have given the authority until 13 January to inform me whether it accepts the proposal.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the applications made by Nicaragua to the World Bank and IADB which have been vetoed by *(a)* the United Kingdom or *(b)* the United States of America in the last five years, giving reasons for the United Kingdom veto in each case.

Mr. Chris Patten: No loan proposals for Nicaragua have been considered by the executive boards of the World Bank and the Inter-American development bank in the past five years.

Bilateral Aid

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the figures for bilateral aid to Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua for the years 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures for gross bilateral aid from the Overseas Development Administration are as follows:

	£ million 1986	1987
Costa Rica	0·52	0·36
Honduras	0·76	0·81
Nicaragua	0·09	—

In addition, the Commonwealth Development Corporation provided the following amounts of project aid in the form of loans or equity investment:

	£ million 1986	1987
Costa Rica	9·52	2·23
Honduras	0·50	—

We have also provided aid for projects jointly funded with British voluntary agencies. Financial year disbursements are:

	£ million 1986-87	1987-88
Costa Rica	—	0·01
Honduras	0·03	0·05
Nicaragua	0·02	0·05

Cambodia

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what humanitarian aid Britain is providing for Cambodia.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have already contributed £100,000 to the Food and Agriculture Organisation/World Food Programme appeal for Cambodia and I recently announced an increase of £500,000 to support projects, including humanitarian projects in Cambodia, proposed by British voluntary agencies for assistance under the joint funding scheme. In addition, I have decided to make a contribution of £250,000 to the UNICEF programme in Cambodia.

Voluntary Recruiting Agencies

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to increase the level of financial support to the British volunteer recruiting agencies.

Mr. Chris Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval, I propose to make a total of £13 million available in 1989-90 to the British agencies which recruit volunteers to work in developing countries. This represents an increase of more than 20 per cent on this year's grants and marks our appreciation of the important and distinctive role that British volunteers play.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Cathedrals

74. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if, since 28 November, the Church Commissioners have had any discussions with the authorities of the General Synod of the Church of England with a view to securing the amendment of the draft Care of Cathedrals Measure and enabling it to complete its passage through Synod in time to come before Parliament for consideration before 1 June 1989.

Mr. Alison: The progress of the draft Care of Cathedrals Measure is not a matter for the Commissioners. However, I understand that it is hoped to take the revision stage of this Measure at the February group of sessions of the General Synod. The final stage would then be taken in July.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Office Costs Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many employees are employed by hon. Members paid from the secretarial and office allowance.

Mr. Wakeham: The total number of individual payments made from the office costs allowance to persons employed by Members is currently 1,267.

TRANSPORT

Radio Beacons

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fishing vessles of more than 12 m registered length have been inspected by his Department to ensure that they carry an emergency position indicating radio beacon; what proportion of those British vessels eligible to carry emergency position indicating radio beacons this represents; and how many were found to be deficient.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the form requested. However, from registration records kept, 603 fishing vessels have been equipped with operating on 406 MHz but this does not include approved beacons operating on 121.5 MHz which will continue to be accepted until 1992 if they were installed before the requirements came into force. Some 1,950 fishing vessels will be required to carry these devices by 15 January 1989.

New Motorway (North-East)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the cost of building a three-lane motorway from London to the north-east of England.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has no plans to build such a motorway. We have no estimates of the possible cost.

A1

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average number of vehicles per hour travelling on the A1 in each year from 1960 to date; and what is the projected annual rate for the next 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The earliest year for which data are available is 1983.

Estimated average number of vehicles per hour on the A1

	Number
1983	900
1984	940
1985	990

	Number
1986	1,040
1987	1,060

These estimates are based on counts taken at different times and are subject to sampling errors. The A1 has been defined to include those sections designated as motorways.

The Department prepares forecasts of national traffic. Where specific trunk road improvements are being assessed, local traffic forecasts are prepared. Projections are not otherwise made for specific roads.

Driving Licences

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are employed by the driver and vehicle licensing centre in Swansea; how many inquiries they have received during the last 12 months; and how many driving licences have been *(a)* issued and *(b)* reissued during the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Between December 1987 and November 1988 the driver and vehicle licensing centre issued a total of 6·727 million driving licences of which 1·189 million were first provisional licences and the remainder reissues of varying types.

Driver and vehicle licensing centre's staff in post at 1 December 1988 totalled 5,214. A total of 3,773 are employed at Swansea and the remainder in vehicle registration offices.

In the year 1987-88 there were 373,000 progress inquiries (representing 0·52 per cent. of all transactions processed) and 1·312 million information inquiries making a total of 1·685 million.

Light Dues

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the European Economic Community countries which charge shipowners light dues.

Mr. Portillo: Light dues are charged in Greece, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. I understand that in the Netherlands there is a Government levy on port dues which is applied to meeting the costs of navigational aids outside the ports.

M20 (Hollingbourne to Ashford)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now make a statement on the letting of the first contract for the building of the Hollingbourne to Ashford section of the M20 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contract was let on 9 December. Work will start in January for completion in the spring of 1991.

British Transport Police

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any recommendations from Mr. Charles McLachlan on manning levels of L division of the British Transport police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Mr. McLachlan, one of Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary has reported on his inspection earlier this year of L division of the British Transport police. It is for the BT police committee to consider the recommendations, some of which concern manning levels.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects Mr. McLachlan to conclude his report into the operations of the British Transport police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Mr. McLachlan's report on the L division of British Transport police has been completed. It is proposed to inspect and report on the rest of the force early next year.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public affairs resources the British Transport police has; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that the British Transport police has no press office. Officers deal with the media when appropriate, taking account of force standing orders and can seek assistance and advice from the British Rail and London Regional Transport public affairs departments.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there have been any discussions between his Department and British Rail over the level of funding of the British Transport police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My Department has had recent discussions with the Railways board on a number of issues involving the BTP, including funding arrangements.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the continued existence of the British Transport police as a separate entity.

Mr. Portillo: If a decision to privatise British Rail were taken, it would be necessary to consider whether to change the arrangements for policing the railway. But since no such decision has been taken, no such question arises at present.

Airports

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the 1989-90 capital expenditure allocations for municipal airports and public airport companies.

Mr. Channon: I have today approved borrowing allocations for these airports totalling £23 million. These, together with other resources which they expect to invest, will assist the airports concerned to provide improved facilities which they estimate could cost some £90 million in 1989-90. I am pleased to have been able to include an allocation for a start to be made on the first phase of the major new terminal at Manchester airport. Other major schemes for which I have made provision are:

Birmingham
Further development of existing terminal and infrastructure for new hub terminal to expand capacity.

Bristol
Runway resurfacing.

East Midlands
Improvements to Freight operator's facilities and further terminal improvements.

Humberside
Terminal improvements and car park extension.

Leeds/Bradford
Extension of apron area.
Luton
Taxiway resurfacing; new control tower and improvements to present terminal to increase capacity.
Newcastle
Parallel taxiway.
Teesside
Improved fire and safety facilities.

Some additional allocations may be made during the course of next year.

Oil Spillage (Milford Haven)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the spillage of oil from the ship El Omar in the port of Milford Haven on Saturday 3 December including the cause of the spillage and the action taken to deal with it.

Mr. Portillo: The spillage occurred when the vessel was discharging its cargo at an oil terminal within the port of Milford Haven. The port authority has initiated proceedings against the master of the ship and it would be wrong for me to speculate on the cause of the spillage before any court proceedings that might ensue.

As soon as the spillage was observed, the discharge of cargo was stopped; the port authority activated the Haven anti-oil pollution plan for which it is responsible; and it, together with the terminal operator and local authorities, initiated appropriate containment and clean-up action. This was hampered by strong winds.

When the Department's marine pollution control unit was made aware of the size of the spillage, clean-up advice and assistance were offered to both the port authority and local authorities. Although this was not required the unit satisfied itself that all parties were working together effectively to deal with the situation.

Yachts and Pleasure Boats

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to impose light dues on yachts and pleasure boats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) on 7 November at columns *71-72;* and to my reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 14 November at column *467.*

Traffic Examiners

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of enforcement activity by his Department's traffic examiners.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Substantial increases in the level of enforcement activity are being achieved by improved productivity and a targeting of resources on key priorities.

There has been a steep increase in the number of lorries weighed.

During the six months April to September 1988 the traffic examiners weighed about 60,000 lorries. This is nearly 80 per cent. above the 1987 level and 125 per cent. above 1986. The corresponding increases in the number of tachograph charts checked were nearly 40 per cent. and 70 per cent.

More rigorous and effective enforcement of the law on overloading and drivers' hours will improve safety and reduce road damage.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce his proposals for the levy on London's ratepayers in support of his grant to London Regional Transport for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have today laid before Parliament a draft levy order under section 13 of the London Regional Transport Act which provides for a levy of 9·06p in the pound for 1989-90. This is estimated to raise £188 million, which is equivalent to 65·63 per cent. of my estimated expenditure of £286·6 million in grants to LRT in 1989-90. The balance of £98·6 million will be found from the Exchequer. The order is subject to affirmative resolution.

Highway Authority Expenditure

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much local highway authority expenditure he intends to accept for transport supplementary grant in 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have decided to accept £408 million of local authority highway expenditure for transport supplementary grant in 1989-90. Grant will be paid on this expenditure at 50 per cent. The total of £204 million TSG is nearly 7 per cent. higher than for 1988-89.

A total of 61 new major (over £1 million) schemes will be supported through TSG for the first time. Among these are the Maidstone spine road; the west central route, Newcastle; the Bexleyheath southern relief road; the St. Helens to M62 link road; further stages of the middle ring road in Birmingham; and other important improvements in both urban and rural areas. A total of 17 of these schemes will directly assist inner city areas.

Some 300 other major schemes will continue to receive TSG support. Many of these schemes are already under construction or are due to start in the current financial year. Local authorities have reported completion of 58 TSG-supported schemes costing £227 million in 1987-88 and a start of works on 57 such schemes costing £262 million. During 1988-89, they plan to complete a further 67 schemes costing £267 million and start 95 costing £518 million.

In deciding the distribution of transport supplementary grant for 1989-90, I have considered carefully the transport policies and programme document submitted by each local highway authority, and have looked at the extent to which authorities' programmes relate to roads of more than local importance. Many local authority roads —such as major urban roads and roads on the primary route network—carry significant amounts of through traffic, and thus complement the trunk road network. Improvements to such roads are important locally because they save lives, reduce congestion and relieve communities from the effects of through traffic. They are also of national benefit by aiding the efficient flow of goods, people and services. TSG reflects the national taxpayer's interest in helping local authorities to improve these roads.

Many smaller schemes on these heavily trafficked roads produce very significant accident savings and other

benefits. I have therefore also taken into account £56 million of expenditure on minor (under £1 million) schemes for grant in 1989-90.

The amount of expenditure accepted for TSG and the amount of grant for each local highway authority is set out in the table. Councils are being informed individually today of their own figures.

The distribution of Transport Supplementary Grant for 1989-90

£ million

Authority	*Expenditure accepted for TSG*	*Grant*
Avon	8·392	4·196
Bedfordshire	8·206	4·103
Berkshire	2·390	1·195
Buckinghamshire	2·458	1·229
Cambridgeshire	4·596	2·298
Cheshire	5·552	2·776
Cleveland	8·984	4·492
Cornwall	3·486	1·743
Cumbria	1·280	0·640
Derbyshire	3·030	1·515
Devon	3·486	1·743
Dorset	6·204	3·102
Durham	3·830	1·915
East Sussex	4·964	2·482
Essex	10·148	5·074
Gloucestershire	3·126	1·563
Hampshire	9·664	4·832
Hereford and Worcester	0·692	0·346
Hertfordshire	6·100	3·050
Humberside	10·442	5·221
Isle of Wight	1·050	0·525
Kent	22·512	11·256
Lancashire	12·070	6·035
Leicestershire	7·942	3·971
Lincolnshire	2·378	1·189
Norfolk	2·832	1·416
Northamptonshire	8·250	4·125
Northumberland	0·726	0·363
North Yorkshire	5·306	2·653
Nottinghamshire	4·108	2·054
Oxfordshire	0·046	0·023
Shropshire	3·358	1·679
Somerset	7·570	3·785
Staffordshire	5·984	2·992
Suffolk	3·870	1·935
Surrey	9·368	4·684
Warwickshire	6·418	3·209
West Sussex	3·052	1·526
Wiltshire	0·218	0·109
Total Shire Counties	214·088	107·044
Bolton	0·086	0·043
Bury	3·396	1·698
Manchester	2·656	1·328
Oldham	2·194	1·097
Rochdale	0·526	0·263
Salford	5·582	2·791
Stockport	0·036	0·018
Tameside	1·132	0·566
Trafford	3·530	1·765
Wigan	1·996	0·998
Total Greater Manchester Districts	21·134	10·567
Knowsley	0·546	0·273
Liverpool	3·524	1·762
St. Helens	4·608	2·304
Sefton	0·654	0·327
Wirral	1·418	0·709
Total Merseyside Districts	10·750	5·375
Barnsley	1·090	0·545
Doncaster	1·322	0·661
Rotherham	1·376	0·688
Sheffield	1·170	0·585
Total South Yorkshire Districts	4·958	2·479
Gateshead	4·100	2·050
Newcastle upon Tyne	5·526	2·763
North Tyneside	0·620	0·310
South Tyneside	0·430	0·215
Sunderland	1·930	0·965
Total Tyne and Wear Districts	12·606	6·303
Birmingham	7·908	3·954
Coventry	6·106	3·053
Dudley	0·736	0·368
Sandwell	1·886	0·943
Solihull	1·052	0·526
Walsall	2·144	1·072
Wolverhampton	3·096	1·548
Total West Midlands Districts	22·928	11·464
Bradford	5·856	2·928
Calderdale	0·168	0·084
Kirklees	1·000	0·500
Leeds	3·082	1·541
Wakefield	0·616	0·308
Total West Yorkshire Districts	10·722	5·361
Total Metropolitan Districts	83·098	41·549
City of London	0·388	0·194
Barking and Dagenham	3·790	1·895
Barnet	0·582	0·291
Bexley	2·236	1·118
Brent	0·900	0·450
Bromley	7·666	3·833
Camden	0·172	0·086
Croydon	0·588	0·294
Ealing	5·640	2·820
Enfield	23·916	11·958
Greenwich	0·046	0·023
Hackney	0·820	0·410
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·284	0·142
Haringey	11·624	5·812
Harrow	6·100	3·050
Havering	0·414	0·207
Hillingdon	9·060	4·530
Hounslow	1·428	0·714
Islington	0·296	0·148
Kensington and Chelsea	1·266	0·633
Kingston upon Thames	3·322	1·661
Lambeth	0·364	0·182
Lewisham	10·628	5·314
Merton	8·560	4·280
Newham	0·994	0·497
Redbridge	0·678	0·339
Richmond upon Thames	0·326	0·163
Southwark	3·904	1·952
Sutton	1·364	0·682
Tower Hamlets	0·140	0·070
Waltham Forest	0·952	0·476
Wandsworth	0·866	0·433
Westminster	1·500	0·750
Total London	110·814	55·407
Total England	408·000	204·000

Thornaby and Middleton St. George Bypasses

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is yet in a position to announce the commencement of the Thornaby bypass and A67 Middleton St. George bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Both these proposals are local authority schemes featured in their transport policies and programme. Starting dates will depend upon the priority afforded to them by the respective local authorities.

Manchester Airport (Accident)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report about the British Airways Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport in 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A copy of the report was submitted to the Secretary of State on 15 December. Copies have also been sent to those persons whose reputation might be adversely affected by the report, in accordance with the Civil Aviation (Investigation of Accidents) Regulations 1983.

A period of 28 days is being allowed for affected persons to request a review board. Provided that no review is requested, the report should be published in March 1989.

British Rail

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to limit the exemptions from statutory obligations laid on other transport undertakings currently applying to British Rail.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Perhaps my hon. Friend could let me know which exemptions and which transport undertakings he has in mind.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will have an urgent meeting with the acting chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the technical efficiency and operating competence of the Docklands light railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* London Regional Transport is keeping my Department informed of the action being taken to secure a satisfactory performance of the railway during the major upgrading work currently taking place.

Hunts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those hunts which have a right to cross railway lines in pursuit of their quarry; what steps are taken to ensure that the exercise of such rights is consistent with the need to guarantee the safety of those travelling by train; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* The information requested in the first part of the question is not readily available. Safety is the statutory duty of the British Railways board.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Grants (West Midlands)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the grants available from his Department, and the criteria by which they are awarded, for manufacturing companies resident in the west midlands.

Mr. Atkins: Independent firms or groups with a payroll of fewer than 500 can benefit from the enterprise initiative, which offers financial support for between five and 15 man-days' specialist consultancy in a number of key management functions such as marketing, design, quality, manufacturing systems, business planning and financial and information systems. In the west midlands assisted area (the travel-to-work-areas of Birmingham, Coventry and Hinckley, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell, Telford and Bridgnorth and Kidderminster) the DTI will pay two-thirds of the cost of the consultancy projects, whereas elsewhere in the west midlands the Department will pay half. In addition, selective assistance is available for investment projects undertaken by firms of all sizes in the assisted area for projects that are commercially viable, create or safeguard employment, demonstrate a need for assistance, and offer a distinct regional and national benefit.

Grants of up to half the agreed costs can be made available to firms for collaborative research programmes conducted jointly by more than one organisation, such as industrial and commercial firms, universities and polytechnics, research and technology organisations and Government research laboratories.

All firms in the west midlands are also eligible for assistance under the various export services, some of which can provide financial assistance.

Investment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the level of investment in 1985 prices in *(a)* new plant and equipment, and *(b)* new buildings for the manufacturing, construction, distribution and financial industries in each year since 1978, distinguishing between leased assets and purchased assets.

Mr. Maude: The required information is given in the following tables:

Investment in the manufacturing industries[1]

£ million at 1985 prices

Year	*Direct Expenditure*			*Leased Assets*[2]		
	New building work	*Plant and machinery*	*Vehicles*	*New building work*	*Plant and machinery*	*Vehicles*
1978	1,386	7,387	874	[3]—	492	446
1979	1,417	7,713	889	[3]—	665	349
1980	1,143	6,886	654	[3]—	899	262
1981	835	5,164	528	[3]—	1,013	152

Year	Direct Expenditure			Leased Assets[2]		
	New building work	Plant and machinery	Vehicles	New building work	Plant and machinery	Vehicles
1982	714	5,063	560	51	989	194
1983	635	5,237	592	20	866	192
1984	929	6,232	649	27	916	168
1985	1,110	7,020	596	56	1,257	221
1986	1,007	6,910	562	88	824	186
1987	1,213	7,289	585	22	776	165

[1] Divisions 2, 3 and 4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980).
[2] Assets leased from owners in the financial industries.
[3] Negligible.

Investment in the construction, distribution and financial industries[1] (excluding assets leased to manufacturers)

£ million at 1985 prices

Year	New building work	Plant and machinery	Vehicles
1978	2,995	3,304	2,684
1979	3,333	3,970	3,229
1980	3,309	4,272	2,436
1981	3,292	4,360	2,335
1982	3,626	4,811	2,518
1983	3,739	5,213	2,259
1984	3,985	6,367	2,784
1985	4,084	7,332	3,382
1986	4,429	7,701	2,991
1987	5,106	9,091	3,357

[1] Divisions 5, 6 and 8 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980).

Mergers and Acquisitions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the level of expenditure in standard 1985 prices on mergers and company acquisitions in the United Kingdom since 1978, distinguishing where possible between expenditure by British and non-British companies.

Mr. Maude: The information that is available is published in "Business Monitor" MQ7 "Acquisitions and mergers by industrial and commercial companies", together with articles on acquisitions within the United Kingdom and cross-border acquisitions published in "British Business" magazine on 11 November and 9 December respectively. These publications are available in the Library. The published statistics are at current prices: no appropriate price deflator is available to provide estimates at constant 1985 prices.

Eggs

Mr. Holt: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment has been made of the effect of reduced egg sales on the balance of payments.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on trade in eggs for the 10 months to October 1988 suggest there has been no effect on the balance of payments.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives he plans to take at European Community level, to ensure that European Community regulations on the transport of wastes do not have the effect of discouraging recycling.

Mr. Forth: The United Kingdom Government will take every opportunity to advocate that necessary controls on the international movement of wastes do not have the effect of discouraging recycling.

Scrap Metal Recycling

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives he plans to take to encourage the recycling of scrap metals.

Mr. Forth: We shall continue our present initiatives of sector conferences, promotion of awareness in industry of the benefits of recycling and the provision of technical advice through our Warren Spring laboratory. Where appropriate, further initiatives will be introduced.

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to revise the conditions attaching to grant in aid to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have no such plans at present, although the conditions are kept under review.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the political impartiality of advice given by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and local citizens advice bureaux offices.

Mr. Forth: The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux does not give advice direct to members of the public. So far as local citizens advice bureaux are concerned, I have not received any representations about the political impartiality of their advice to clients.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which union has negotiating rights for staff of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I understand from the national association, which is the employer, that the relevant trade union is Manufacturing Science and Finance (MSF).

Art Auctions (Buyer's Premium)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer to the Office of Fair Trading the practice of the art auction houses of charging a buyer's premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Under United Kingdom competition legislation the Director General of Fair Trading has the

primary responsibility for keeping commercial activities under review and he has discretionary powers to investigate practices which may prevent, restrict or distort competition in the supply of goods and services in the United Kingdom. If my hon. Friend has evidence that the practice which he refers to is anti-competitive he should bring it to the attention of the director general.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evaluation of the achievements of the north Peckham task force has been carried out in terms of *(a)* persons trained, who have subsequently found paid employment and of *(b)* the cost, per job created both directly and indirectly.

Mr. Forth: The task force monitors all projects to check the numbers of people being trained, their names and addresses, and details of jobs obtained. The task force does not seek to create jobs but to give local people the skills to compete effectively in the buoyant London labour market.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the total number of people training through programmes financed by the north Peckham task force; and of those trained, how many were through *(a)* Brook Street bureaux and *(b)* South-East Adult Training.

Mr. Forth: About 1,200 people have been on training schemes for which the north Peckham task force has provided funds, of which 461 have attended programmes run by South-East Adult Training and 41 attended courses sponsored by Brook Street.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the projects financed by the north Peckham task force were funded under each of the four criteria defined on page 2 of the task force local link pamphlet.

Mr. Forth: There are no projects financed under the employment criteria. Those under the other three criteria are as follows:

Enterprise	*Employability*	*Environment*
Gloucester grove shop	Technobus	North Peckham lighting upgrading
Winchcombe court	Womens New Technology Fair	Committee Against Drug Abuse
Black Business Training	Teenage Information Network	North Peckham Baptist Church
Southwark Environment Trust I	South East Adult Training	Colegrove road allotments
Artichoke mews	Rusjon apprenticeship	London Wildlife Trust
Headstart in Business	Southwark AEI	
Vietnamese Headstart	Peckham Industrial Association	
SCDA Translation	Ethnic Minority Database	
SCDA SCO-OP Technology	Southwark Fair	
SCDA Exhibition	Southwark Sports	

Peckham Trading Association
MARI I
Industrial Society—Training for Voluntary Groups
Fairbridge Drake Society
Southwark College
Sight and Sound I
London Community Cricket Association
Home Safety Scheme
Vietnamese Refugee Community
North Peckham Sewing Workshop
Practical Action
ILEA
South East Adult Training II
Brook St Phase II
Skills Survey
Newpin
Spotlight in Music
Warwick Park School
JETS Fair
Jobs in the City
MARI II
Afro-Caribbean Radio
Family Welfare Association

Princes Youth Business Trust	PATH
Task Force Business Development Fund	Caribbean Teachers Association
LENTA	Hotel and Catering Training Board (HCTB) I Apex Employment Resource Centre Video Unit
Southwark Chamber of Commerce	Work and Schools Project
City Technology Centre	BBC/Project FullEmploy
URBED	Summer Skills Workshop (Southwark Unemployed Youth Project)
URBED (Vietnamese BEP)	Church and Community Project
Southwark College Business Video	Sojourner Truth Youth Association
Peckham Enterprise Centre	Careers Service Newsletter
GLEB	Industrial Society Management Course
SLBI-Fashion South	Ideal Homes Apprenticeships
Southwark Environment Trust	Brook St. Phase I

Forest of London
Computer Literacy on Outreach basis I
Children of the Inner City
Deptford Skills Centre

HCTB II
Walworth World of Work
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority
Find a Job Fortnight
Gloucester Grove Tenants Association Unemployed Project
Project Fullemploy
Interactive Video
Vietnamese Refugee Community—Summer Skills
(Pan African Society)
Computer Literacy
Outreach II
Turkish Education Group
Southwark Architects Feasibility Study
Publicity Trailer
Sight and Sound II
Caribbean Teachers Association—(Computer Literacy Outreach III)
NACRO Print Workshop

Peckham Bookplace

JARVIS
Industrial Society Coordinator Post (Pre-recruitment Training)
Brook St Phase III

Rattan

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will outline the action he has taken in the European Community Council of Ministers, or in bilateral discussions, to bring about the removal of the ban on the export of rattan, following the Minister for Trade's meeting with the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton and Mr. Robert Angrave on 19 July; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My officials have raised the issue in the appropriate European Community fora and it has also been raised with the Indonesian authorities by the Commission. The Community has notified the ban to the GATT Uruguay round surveillance body as a trade restriction and will request consultations with the Indonesian authorities under the GATT dispute settlement procedures at the first possible opportunity.

Mail Deliveries

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will meet the chairman of the Post Office in an endeavour to ensure that hon. Members posting urgent mail from their constituencies to Westminster on Fridays and Saturdays have a reasonable chance of having it delivered in under three days;

(2) if he will seek from the chairman of the Post Office an explanation as to why there has been a significant deterioration in the handling of weekend mail in England, particularly in the west midlands.

Mr. Forth: The quality of weekend mail services is an operational matter for the Post Office. My right hon. Friend discusses the quality of the Post Office's service regularly at his meetings with the chairman. We agree with the chairman that the service needs to be improved and are in no doubt about his commitment to improve it, including weekend services in the west midlands and services for mail to and from this House.

Resider Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on approvals under the integrated operations programme of the European Commission; what proportion of this will be part of the Resider programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* Commission approval for the ERDF Yorkshire and Humberside integrated operation programme is expected shortly. The Resider programme for South Yorkshire and Scunthorpe is separate and has already been approved.

Imports (EC)

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what percentage of the United Kingdom's total imports from the European Community came from *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy in 1987;

(2) what percentage of the United Kingdom's total exports to the European Community went to *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy in 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The information is given in the following table:

European Community		*of which, with*		
	Total £ billion	*FR Germany Per cent.*	*France Per cent.*	*Italy Per cent.*
Imports	46·1	32·5	17·8	11·3
Exports	39·4	23·9	19·8	10·4

Note: Import figures are on the country of origin basis

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Taxation Statistics

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the tax breakeven points for each year since 1959-60 for a single person, married couple, married couple with two children and married couple with four children, showing the value of such points *(a)* using an index set at 100 in 1959-60, *(b)* as a proportion of average male earnings, and *(c)* in 1988 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The "tax breakeven point" is the value of earnings at which income tax paid is equal to the money received through child benefit or family allowance. It therefore gives the level of earnings above which the family pays more income tax than it obtains in benefits for children. The breakeven point for single people and married couples with no children is therefore the tax threshold.

Information is given in the tables for 1959-60, 1969-70 and years from 1979-80; further information is published in appendix C of "Inland Revenue Statistics".

Tax year	*At current prices (£)*	*Index 1959-60 = 100*	*As proportion of average male earnings*[1]	*At 1988-89 prices (£)*
Tax threshold for single person				
1959-60	193	100	23·2	1,684
1969-70	328	169·9	23·1	2,020
1979-80	1,165	603·6	20·5	2,137
1980-81	1,375	712·4	20·1	2,167
1981-82	1,375	712·4	18·1	1,944
1982-83	1,565	810·9	19·1	2,068

Tax year	At current prices (£)	Index 1959-60 = 100	As proportion of average male earnings[1]	At 1988-89 prices (£)
1983-84	1,785	924·9	20·1	2,254
1984-85	2,005	1,038·9	20·8	2,409
1985-86	2,205	1,142·5	21·4	2,502
1986-87	2,335	1,209·8	21·0	2,567
1987-88	2,425	1,256·5	20·1	2,564
1988-89[2]	2,605	1,349·7	19·7	2,605
Tax threshold for married man with no children				
1959-60	322	100	38·7	2,809
1969-70	482	149·7	34·0	2,969
1979-80	1,815	563·7	31·9	3,330
1980-81	2,145	666·1	31·4	3,381
1981-82	2,145	666·1	28·3	3,033
1982-83	2,445	759·3	29·9	3,230
1983-84	2,795	868·0	31·4	3,530
1984-85	3,155	979·8	32·8	3,790
1985-86	3,455	1,073·0	33·5	3,921
1986-87	3,655	1,135·1	32·9	4,018
1987-88	3,795	1,178·6	31·5	4,013
1988-89[2]	4,095	1,271·7	31·0	4,095
Break-even point for married man with two children[3]				
1959-60	729	100	87·6	6,359
1969-70	878	120·4	61·8	5,408
1979-80	3,327	456·4	58·5	6,103
1980-81	3,625	497·3	53·1	5,714
1981-82	3,855	528·8	50·8	5,451
1982-83	4,341	595·5	53·0	5,735
1983-84	4,905	672·8	55·2	6,194
1984-85	5,453	748·0	56·7	6,551
1985-86	5,849	802·3	56·7	6,637
1986-87	6,190	849·1	55·7	6,804
1987-88	6,588	903·7	54·6	6,966
1988-89[2]	7,111	975·4	53·8	7,111
Break-even point for married man with four children[3]				
1959-60	1,276	100	153·4	11,130
1969-70	1,418	111·1	99·9	8,735
1979-80	4,713	369·4	82·9	8,646
1980-81	5,108	400·3	74·8	8,051
1981-82	5,565	436·1	73·4	7,869
1982-83	6,237	488·8	76·2	8,240
1983-84	7,016	549·8	78·9	8,860
1984-85	7,750	607·4	80·6	9,310
1985-86	8,242	645·9	79·8	9,353
1986-87	8,725	683·8	78·5	9,590
1987-88	9,380	735·1	77·8	9,919
1988-89[2]	10,127	793·7	76·6	10,127

[1] Full time males paid at adult rates working a full week in all occupations.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Two children under 11; one child aged between 11 and 15; one child 16 or over.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much would be placed on the standard rate of income tax to raise the equivalent amount of *(a)* the employee's national insurance contribution and *(b)* the employer's national insurance contribution.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that, in a full year at 1989-90 levels of income, a 10p increase in the basic rate of income tax would yield the same amount as employees' national insurance contributions. A 12p increase would yield the same amount as employers' national insurance contributions. The estimates are provisional and do not allow for any behavioural changes.

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December at column 1080.

EEC (Auditors' Report)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the report of the European Economic Community auditors published on 13 December will be considered by the Council of Economic Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The agenda for next year's meetings of the Economic and Finance Council have not yet been decided, but on precedent I would expect the court's report to be considered by the Council in the early part of next year.

Civil Service Pensioners

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what percentage of Civil Service pensioners have been classified as having left their employment on grounds of invalidity.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that this information cannot be provided without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources. However, in 1987 some 2,350 of the 15,500 pensions for non-industrial civil servants that were brought into payment were ill-health retirement benefits. A civil servant may be retired early on medical grounds if the Civil Service occupational health advisory service is satisfied that the breakdown in health is such that it prevents the civil servant from carrying out his or her duties and that the ill health is likely to be permanent. Almost 60 per cent. of those retired on health grounds were aged 55 and over.

Mortgages

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which report by the citizens advice bureau the Economic Secretary to the Treasury was referring to in his answer to the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 8 December *Official Report*, column 422.

Mr. Lilley: "Debt Problems in Kent and East Sussex", published by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux south-east area money advice support unit, of 80 St. John's road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN49TH.

Unearned Income

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total unearned income of taxpayers living in each region of Britain for 1979, 1987 and 1988, giving the number of tax units living in each region.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The readily available information covers tax units with income above the pay as you earn threshold regardless of whether or not they are liable to income tax; it relates to years ended 5 April rather than to calender years. Only the investment income in the records of tax offices is covered in the table: where liability at basic rate is satisfied at source, the tax office may have no record of the income. The latest available year is at present 1985-86.

Region	*Number of tax units resident in the region (thousands) 1979-80*	*Total investment income (£ million)*	*Number of tax units resident in the region (thousands) 1985-86*	*Total investment income £ million*
North	1,180	234	1,140	466
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,930	455	1,780	745
North West	2,600	518	2,340	899
East Midlands	1,450	327	1,470	568
West Midlands	2,130	468	1,930	751
East Anglia	755	255	760	518
South East	7,230	2,510	7,110	4,270
South West	1,830	751	1,720	1,270
Wales	982	235	930	390
Scotland	2,070	511	1,920	894
Northern Ireland	510	96	495	139

Tax Fraud

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what, further to his reply of 28 November, *Official Report*, columns *105-7*, is the ratio of staff directly dealing with tax fraud and evasion to the detection to such frauds and evasion for each year since 1975.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The ratio of full-time staff units employed in investigating tax fraud and evasion to completed Inland Revenue investigations resulting in additional liability in each year since 1980 is as follows, together with the average amount recovered—tax, interest and penalties—per staff unit over the same period.

Year	*Ratio of staff unit to cases settled*	*Yield per staff unit £*
1980	1:42	81,600
1981	1:39	84,600
1982	1:40	119,900
1983	1:40	129,400
1984	1:38	164,700
1985	1:31	162,000
1986	1:28	193,500
1987	1:26	201,100
1988	1:24	201,700

Figures are not available for earlier years.

Although the number of cases settled per staff unit has decreased since 1980, the yield per staff unit has in money

terms more than doubled over the same period. This reflects a policy of using a greater proportion of resources on the larger, more complex cases.

Coventry Four

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what inquiries were carried out in relation to the alleged activities of a fifth person at the time of inquiries into allegations of sanction breaching by the Coventry four.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* A fifth person was arrested on 29 March 1984, but no evidence was found to justify a charge and he was later released by Customs.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the steps taken to secure the return of the alleged criminals, Colonel Hendrik Botha, Stephanus de Jaser, William Metelerkamp and Jacobus la Grange from South Africa, to stand trial in Britain.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Bail of £400,000 was set to induce the return of the four South Africans. They were prevented from returning to this country by the South African Government. It was clear that further moves by Customs to secure their return would be fruitless. Bail was forfeited.

Income Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the projected additional yield of income tax for 1989-90 and 1990-91 *(a)* if the higher rate tax bands as they existed before the Finance Act 1988 were to be reinstated in the 1989 Budget and *(b)* if the basic rate of tax were to be raised to 27p for higher rate taxpayers only.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Available information is given in the table. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. The base for the comparison is the indexed income tax regime for 1989-90 shown in table 4.1 of the Autumn Statement. Further information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The estimates do not allow for any behavioural effects and exclude the effect of the changes on the yield of capital gains tax.

Effect on the yield of income tax of changes in basic rate and higher rate tax at 1989-90 levels of income

	Full Year Yield £ million
(a) Reintroduction of 1987-88 higher rate tax bands and rates	2,160
(b) Raising of basic rate of tax to 27 per cent. for higher rate taxpayers only	550

Tobacco Taxes

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total revenue from tobacco taxes and from value added tax on tobacco products in each of the last nine financial years; and what are his estimates of the revenue from such taxes in 1988-89.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

£ million

	Total tax on tobacco products	*of which:*	
		Excise duty	*[1]VAT*
1979-80	3,156	2,584	572
1980-81	3,467	2,821	646
1981-82	4,166	3,420	746
1982-83	4,224	3,446	778
1983-84	4,628	3,806	822
1984-85	5,019	4,140	879
1985-86	5,383	4,459	924
1986-87	5,745	4,755	990
1987-88	5,775	4,767	1,008
1988-89	n/a	5,000	[2]

Notes:
n/a = not available
[1] VAT receipts have been estimated from consumers' expenditure on tobacco products.
[2] Forecasts of consumer expenditure are not available in sufficient detail to enable reliable estimates of future VAT receipts to be made.

ENERGY

Electricity (Privatisation)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he intends to set any special share restrictions on the ownership of shares in the electricity industry after privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes.

Drigg (Canister)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now publish the report of the Health and Safety Executive on the discovery of a canister containing plutonium oxide fuel pellets at Drigg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have now received the report of the investigation conducted by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution following the discovery of a canister at Drigg, whose contents were contaminated with small amounts of plutonium. The main conclusions of the investigation are set out in a news release made today by the HSE, a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out for each of the individual projects listed, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar, (Mr. McCrindle) *Official Report*, 4 November, columns *819-22* in the eight research categories *(a)* the financial assistance provided in the period November 1987 to October 1988 and *(b)* the total financial assistance provided from Government funds since the start for each project.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Renewable energy projects for which the Department provided financial assistance in the period November 1987 to October 1988 are listed together with the total spend by the Department on the projects to October 1988, and the spend during the period November 1987—October 1988.

Renewable energy projects which have received financial assistance from the department of energy during the period November 1987 to October 1988

Project title	*Contractor*	*D'EN total spent '000*	*Spend November 1987 October 1988 '000*
1. Biofuel projects			
Experimental studies on catch fuel crops	U. Reading	67·398	−0·350
BR5/2—Coppiced trees as energy crops	Forestry Comm	112·607	7·303
BR5/3—Single stem trees as energy crops	U. Aberdeen	203·593	29·627
C4/1 Straw combustion trials	FEC 1	83·714	11·884
IHTEG of forestry for energy with agriculture	U. Reading	82·385	30·078
Assessment of basic landfill microbio PT II	Food RI	30·310	14·470
C4/1—Support to straw combustion trials	FEC 1	19·563	2·285
Coppice weed control	LARS	27·673	10·453
BR5/4 Large scale trails of short rotation coppice	U. Aberdeen	142·174	74·058
BR4/3 EOP trials—Harvesting processing + storing	U. Aberdeen	232·300	126·810
C5/2—Wood combustion trials	FEC 1	104·401	47·887
Model for refuse processing	WSL	27·150	9·855
C5/2—Support to wood combustion trials	FEC 1	3·897	3·897
National assessment of LF gas production—PH 1	ERL	185·871	121·530
C5/03 Monitoring of project 1557 (Fibroheat)	OVE ARUP	65·685	30·277
Support services in forestry for energy	U. Aberdeen	34·343	22·988
C4/6 Consultancy in farm wastes as fuel area	Halcrow	30·177	6·758
Development of a mobile straw wafering machine	AFRC	210·830	111·410
Development of a mobile straw wafering machine	British sugar	99·316	99·316
Thermochemical conversion of wastes + Biomass	U. Aston	8·863	4·288
RDF Combustion trials	WSL	235·532	160·340
Peat as fuel	SCAE	61·457	38·150
Fouling and corrosion studies	WYPR	13·388	1·674
Cyclone combustor with integrated ash removal	CPC	26·400	26·400
Modified chain grate stoker shell boiler	Energy supplies	120·357	120·357
Waste processing and emissions monitoring	WSL	3·388	3·388
Shredded waste derived fuel storage bunker trials	Henley Burrowes	13·931	13·931
Hydrogeological assessment	WRC	1·441	1·441
Review of market for industrial waste combustors	PE Inbucon	41·085	28·774
Pre treated refuse	WSL	25·716	25·716
RDF combustion programme consultancy services	WYPR	15·493	11·143
RDF combustion	WYPR	14·165	7·546
Methane recovery from anaerobic digestion MSW	Coombs J.	3·875	3·875
Access agreement 2 on project 1668	Avery	0·721	0·721
Review of private waste disposal contracting Ind	Aspinwall	13·450	13·450
2. Geothermal Energy Projects			
Consultancy studies	Hoare Lea	41·210	1·458
Marchwood Access Licence	CEGB	3·600	1·200
Southampton District Heating Monitoring	Utilicom	52·000	52·000
Geothermal project at Rosemanowes: Phase 2B	CSM	9,081·000	−98·643
Seismic Monitoring in S.W. England: 1987-89	BGS Edingburgh	188·069	119·709
Cost Modelling of HDR Systems	Poly Sunderland	79·829	54·526
Geothermal Project at Rosemanowes: Phase 2C	CSM	5,866·000	3,325·000
Project Management Study at Rosemanowes Quarry	Taylor Woodrow	57·684	5·235

Project title	Contractor	D'EN total spent '000	Spend November 1987 October 1988 '000
Development of Geothermal power plant TWVC	KSES	84·027	16·018
Commercialisation Studies at Rosemanowes Quarry	Taylor Woodrow	253·655	63·662
Consultancy Services for Prog	Geoscience	32·965	22·367
Radon Gas Measurement in CSM Reservoir	U. Bath	73·648	40·542
Hydro Thermal Alteration of Granite to 250 Celcius	CSM	13·530	13·530
Infrastructure Study—Weardale plus Cumbria	RTZ	15·623	15·623
Environmental Study at Weardale plus Cumbria	Tecnitas	13·630	13·630
Geochemical Studies of HDR Reservoirs	BGS Keyworth	116·541	116·541
3. Hydro Projects			
Feasibility of Pneumatic Hydro-Electric Systems	Hydro Energy	71·259	3·750
Performance plus Economics of Pneumatic Water Engine	Poly Plymouth	46·729	11·270
Pneumatic Low Head Hydro Systems (Monitoring)	Hydro Energy	50·677	11·475
Wells Turbine Pneumatic Power Conversion	U. Belfast	31·777	11·710
Potential Resource in United Kingdom plus Northern Ireland	SCEL	142·449	112·247
4. Solar Projects			
Operating Agent for IEA Task III	U. Cardiff	161·286	37·546
Bebington Trombe Wall House Trial	Pilkington	182·288	−0·087
Seri-Res Refinement	Poly Cen London	150·691	0·721
Housing Layout Design Guide	NBA Tectonics	25·100	20·000
Performance Analysis Service II	CAP Scientific	658·421	123·935
Housing Design Guide	AASA	102·496	47·443
Non Domestic Design Studies I	OVE ARUP	153·060	22·260
Linford/Pennylands Book	ECD Partnership	9·336	2·773
Field Trials Team 1 Phase II (Project 1169)	Databuild	103·426	37·331
Field Trials Team 1 Phase III (Projects 1169 1371)	Databuild	118·523	118·523
Test Cells 2 (EEC)	U. Strathclyde	110·000	35·000
Tea Task XI	Databuild	59·455	31·740
DAS Feasibility Study I	PE Inbucon	76·636	·350
Cost Analysis Service II	Davis Langdon	128·437	92·565
Performance Analysis Review I Part I	U. Wist	13·465	6·887
Heat Transfer Coefficient Review Phase I	Halcrow	26·376	13·677
Performance Analysis Review III	Abacus	10·266	2·953
User Interface Development I	Ecotec	15·064	11·051
Performance Analysis Review IV	U. Newcastle	11·328	11·328
Test Cells 3	Energy Monitoring 3	65·966	37·417
Code Development II	Haves P	2·088	1·225
Applicability Study 1	Poly Leicester	98·607	98·607
Teatask VIII Sub Task C	BRE	139·502	57·712
UK/US Test Rooms	Poly Cen London	7·699	7·699
Liaison with Institutions	NBA Tectonics	16·650	16·650
Programme Consultancy 2 (AB)	U. Newcastle	1·876	1·876
Fenestration 2000—Market Context Study	Pilkington	12·075	12·075
Airium/Cons Review	OVE ARUP	14·472	14·472
Non Domestic Building Design Studies 2	Halcrow	51·025	39·808
Field Trials Team 2	U. Wist	233·191	72·656
Criterion Values I	U. Surrey	24·108	2·217
Non Domestic Design Studies Phase 2 (ATRIA)	BDP	45·397	45·397
House Design Studies II (Midlands)	Databuild	50·666	27·451
House Design Studies II (South)	NBA Tectonics	11·980	7·550
Performance Analysis Service	CAP Scientific	159·164	140·575
Performance Analysis Service	Oscar Faber	25·305	25·305
Assistance to the Passive Solar Programme	CAP Scientific	6·018	6·018
Airflow Modelling Review Project	OVE ARUP	4·952	4·952
5. Wind Projects			
Performance monitoring of Orkney HAWTS	WEG	1665·867	21,362
Further studies of the vertical axis wind turbine	McAlpine Robert	167·413	−·807
Construction of Carmarthen Bay 25m VAVGWTG	VAWTL	1711·777	400·000
Performance monitoring of 25m VAVGWTG	VAWTL	1304·096	263·029
Base consultancy to wind energy programme	Atkins Consultants	261·914	31·543
Prediction of fatigue damage in wind turbines	Taylor Woodrow	43·099	4·800
Finite element modelling of wind turbines	Garrad Hassan	16·128	2·115
Near wake wind tunnel studies	U. Loughborough	57·922	9·848
Monitoring equipment for 60m HAWTG LS-1 PH II+III	WEG	721·329	83·224
Consultancy to project 1361	Garrad Hassan	2·507	1·675
Fatigue evaluation of wood laminates	U. Bath	190·376	25·741
Wind energy cost modelling	Poly Sunderland	47·677	19·591
Syncrhronous/induction generator testing	Taywood Eng.	78·862	33·696
Fatigue strength of weld details	WEGL	65·880	65·880
Model survey of prototype 25m VGVAWTG	VAWTL	50·497	9·507
Assessment of wind potential at WEC sites	U.East Anglia	76·741	41·727
Analysis of flexible WTGS	U.City	46·941	23·096
Design+dynamic analysis of flexible WTGS	SERC	·000	−12·000
Development of turbine for Richborough site	CEGB	353·656	353·656

Project title	*Contractor*	*D'EN total spent '000*	*Spend November 1987 October 1988 '000*
Turbulence spectra for rotating VAWTG	Garrad Hassan	15·046	1·646
Test of a WTG with stall regulated blades	Taywood Eng.	214·426	73·705
Relocation of the 28m mast Orkney	Taylor Woodrow	25.636	2·936
Prediction of community noise levels due to WT OP	U.Southampton	30·498	12·991
Fatigue tests of wood blade/stud interfaces	WEGL	72·170	20·230
Wind tunnel evaluation of thick aerofoil sections	U.Reading	89·232	65·059
Design of support structure mech + elec systems	VAWTL	55·441	6·614
Use of wood for large WTG rotors	Composite	170·598	17.799
Survey of control methods for VAWTS	U.London QMC	21·085	14·190
Flow visualization in USA	James Howden	2.630	·260
Wind measurement at West Sole	BMT	128·984	93·240
Review of GRP WTG blades and design codes	VAWTL	20·571	20·571
Outline design of LS-2 MW-scale HAWTG	WEGL	301·910	110·669
Benchmark exercise on load prediction	WEGL	15·974	4·879
Validation of unsteady flow study	Cranfield	6·819	6·819
Effect of turbine rotation on max lift coefficient	U.London Imperial	11·647	11·647
Stall control on WTGS	U.London Imperial	21·693	21·693
Performance prediction for stalling HAWTGS	Cranfield	47·075	47·075
Direct coupled generators for large WTGS	IRD	23·850	18·233
Weight/cost projections for MW VAWTGS	VAWTL	63·732	13·219
Parametric cost study of large hawtgs	WEGL	40·948	7.647
Fatigue of welded joints in wtgs	Welding Institute	19·272	19.272
Vawtg aerodynamics in the environment + W/tunnels	VAWTL	92·016	64·328
Full scale flow visualisation of wtg	U. Bristol	52·141	39·827
Long term fatigue measurements on MS-1	WEGL	54·997	9·977
Long term wind + performance data for MS-1	WEGL	18·768	15·228
Options for variable speed operation of hawtgs	WEGL	43·491	32·480
Base consultancy continuation	Atkins consultants	89·376	71·963
Sensitivity of design of Howden 1 MW wtg	James Howden	42·203	10·818
Investigation of the onset of stall on WTG blades	U. Southampton	9·990	9·990
Characterisation of wake turbulence	Garrad Hassan	34·264	31·435
Detail design of 1.2 MW VAWTG	VAWTL	402·550	353·790
Design of aerofoils specifically for VAWTGS	U. Glasgow	6·283	6·283
Extension of adaptive control techniques	WEGL	116·824	116·824
Noise + visuals characteristics of wtg in M. Keynes	MKDC	10·031	10·031
60M WTG performance monitoring phase 4	WEGL	97·286	97·286
Design of aerofoil sections for hawtgs	Garrad Hassan	41·013	36·985
Wind turbine control systems modelling + design	U. Strathclyde	38·565	17·801
Design construction + demo of MS3 wtg	WEGL	193·000	193·000
Study of an all wood composite rotor	WEGL	62·750	62·750
Leading edge devices for control of HAWTGS	British Aerospace 1	4·095	4·095
WT investigations of wake structure in wind farms	Garrad Hassan	18·733	12·993
Environmental constraints on UK wind resource	HERC (ITE)	36·817	36·817
Further development of finite element dynamic code	Garrad Hassan	53·724	48·045
Future development for the Howden 750KW/1MW WTS	James Howden	70·372	70·372
Control system simulation package WTS exec group	Industrial S+C	21.498	21·498
6. Tidal Projects			
Further consideration of caisson design	Yard	38·650	3·860
Air turbines for the tidal barrages	Yard	21·000	4·200
Hydraulic effects of a tidal barrage	Mersey barrage	65·451	12·418
Mersey barrage feasibility study stage I	Mersey barrage	184·457	111·222
Tidal barrage construction	RPT	183·600	59·467
Consultancy in tidal power	Binnie	26·780	11·443
Post-barrage densities of birds: wader study	NERC (ITE)	81·775	51·863
Migratory fish—passage through low head turbines	Solomon DJ	20·515	10·952
Wader migration	BTO	38·229	31·243
Ecology of sub estuaries of the Severn	U. Bristol	44·959	25·318
Post barrage densities of birds: invertebrates	NERC (IMER)	60·812	60·812
Post barrage densities of birds: sediments	Ravensrodd	31·986	26·470
Severn barrage preparation of work prog public con	Balfour Beatty	82·967	8·297
Generic steel designs (SCI)	SCI	78·042	78·042
Severn barrage development project	STPG	1,020·286	782·760
Predicting marginal veg post barrage development	NERC (ITE)	10·384	10·384
7. Wave Projects			
Operation and maintenance of cadnam wave tank	Wavepower	247·351	−4·000
Wave energy studies	U. Edinburgh	366·872	15·000
Work on Wells turbine	U. Belfast	55·949	3·295
Reactionless wave energy converter	U. Lancaster	20·623	−0·701
Development of small scale sea clam	Sea	311·344	1·428
Small scale low cost wave energy devices (phase I)	U. Belfast	61·954	12·531
Wave tank facility U. Edinburgh	U. Edinburgh	59·990	25·000
Small scale low cost wave power devices phase II	U. Belfast	176·418	176·418
Further work on PS frog	U. Lancaster	9·526	9·526

Project title	Contractor	D'EN total spent '000	Spend November 1987 October 1988 '000
8. General Studies Projects			
Common costing methodology for renewables	Yard	69·401	48·076
Res and energy efficiency in Cornwall	Cornwall CC	53·608	53·608
Impact of EC N N Energy R and D	U. Ulster	21·881	21·881
CCC energy study support (project 1595)	Halcrow	14·050	13·360
Simple costing methodology for RE programme	RPT	12·400	12·400
Watt committee renewable energy resource project	Watt committee	16·000	8·000

Note: A few projects were subject to final pricing during the period November 1987 to October 1988 on completion of contract. In some cases this led to a credit which is shown as a negative amount on the above table.

Electricity Generation

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out in a table the sources of electric power together with capacity of the two reconstituted Scottish integrated power companies.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

The installed generating capacity to be available to the successor companies to the Scottish electricity boards is as follows:

Scottish Generating Plant by fuel type (output capacity)

	South Company (MW)	North Company (MW)
Hydro-electric	325	860
Nuclear[1]	2,055	685
Coal	3,231	600
Oil[2]	1,926	—
Oil/Gas	634	634
Pumped Storage	400	300

Notes:

[1] includes 1,290MW of output capacity at the Torness AGR station which is being commissioned at present.

[2] the oil fired station at Inverkip is currently in long term storage.

This reflects the arrangements for the restructuring of the Scottish industry pursuant to Cm 327 as announced by my right hon. Friend on 18 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *515*.

The details of the associated contracts are being worked out by the boards at present. Consideration is also being given to the desirability of some further contractual exchanges of capacity and energy to the mutual commercial benefit of both companies.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Irradiation

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to allow the irradiation of food.

Mr. Ryder: I have nothing to add to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for West Gloucestershire (Mr. Marland) on 24 March, at column 207.

Eggs

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to collect statistics on how many eggs are infected with salmonella enteritidis in each parliamentary constituency, starting with the constituency of Stalybridge and Hyde.

Mr. Ryder: The number of eggs which have been found to be contaminated with salmonells enteritidis to date is very small, particularly when compared with the enormous number of eggs consumed in this country. In these circumstances, it would be impossible to produce any meaningful statistics without sampling on a vast scale. A far more fruitful use of resources are the investigations which my officials conduct into salmonella outbreaks on farms associated with cases of food poisoning.

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek powers to restrict the movement of eggs off farms where salmonella has been found to be present.

Mr. Ryder: The powers to restrict the movement of animals, birds or their products, including eggs, from any place where salmonella has been found present already exist in the Zoonoses Order 1975. I am currently reviewing all the options for reducing the incidence of salmonella in poultry, including the effectiveness of this legislation.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a list of egg producers whose products have been identified as the cause of food poisoning in the past three years.

Mr. Ryder: This information is a matter of confidence between the producers and Government. All reported cases are investigated by my officials, who provide advice to producers on the control of disease and measures to prevent recurrence.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the results of the research work commissioned by the Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives into eggs and salmonella.

Mr. Ryder: I can confirm that the agricultural development and advisory service has undertaken research into egg nutrient content and physical quality funded by the Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives. Disclosure of the findings of this research is, however, normally a matter for the customer to decide, under the standard commercial terms and conditions adopted for ADAS contact research and development projects.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in establishing the cause of the salmonella infections of turkeys, chickens and eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Salmonella organisms are widespread in the environment. The problem has been recognised for very many years. The potential for contamination is known to exist at various stages of the production chain.

Export Rates (Fraud)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the powers available to the ministerial Councils of the EEC to prevent the substantial frauds on export rebates permitted by certain member states as detailed in the Court of Auditors report on 13 December.

Mr. MacGregor: The Council is currently considering a proposed regulation which would require member states to carry out a minimum level of physical inspections of exports attracting Community refunds. The Court of Auditors has recommended that this measure should be supplemented, for example by targeting inspections on consignments which are of higher value or risk. The Government are very concerned to reduce fraud in the Community and I will be pressing the Council to reach an early decision on this proposal, taking full account of the court's views.

NORTHERN IRELAND

NHS Grading

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for Northern Ireland the numbers and percentages of nurses, midwives, health visitors and other staff affected by the nursing and midwifery staff negotiations, in each grade, for each health board in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Numbers and percentages of all clinical staff assimilated to each of the new grades by health and social services boards

	Eastern	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*
A				
Percentage	18	16	20	17
Numbers	1,412	387	516	407
B				
Percentage	1	—	—	1
Numbers	78	—	—	24
C				
Percentage	8	18	15	13
Numbers	628	435	387	312
D				
Percentage	22	16	11	9
Numbers	1,726	387	284	216
E				
Percentage	32	26	32	37
Numbers	2,510	629	825	886
F				
Percentage	3	5	4	5
Numbers	236	122	103	120
G				
Percentage	14	15	15	15
Numbers	1,098	363	387	359
H				
Percentage	1	2	2	1
Numbers	78	48	51	24
I				
Percentage	1	2	1	2
Numbers	78	48	26	48
Staff in post (whole-time equivalents)	7,844	2,419	2,579	2,396

Voluntary Grammar Schools

3. **Mr. Hume:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the block grants paid to each of the voluntary grammar schools for category B expenditure in the 1987-88 school year and the numbers of fee-paying pupils in each of these schools in the 1987-88 school year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

School	*Category B Grants Payable*	*Fee Paying Pupils*
	£	
Armagh Christian Brothers	114,487	8
Armagh Royal	236,432	45
Armagh, St. Patrick's College	145,450	53
Ballymena Academy	368,723	25
Ballymena, St. Louis	305,139	5
Ballymoney, Dalriada	274,759	16
Ballynahinch Assumption	227,128	9
Bangor Grammar	298,038	31
Belfast, Bloomfield	156,829	31
Belfast, Campbell	451,739	109
Belfast Christian Brothers	406,493	14
Belfast Dominican	248,454	14
Belfast High School	245,316	11
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	205,323	149
Belfast, Methodist College	740,770	148
Belfast, Our Lady & St. Patricks	346,507	3
Belfast, Royal Belfast Academical Institution	477,278	42
Belfast, Royal Academy	595,881	63
Belfast, St. Dominic's	321,359	22
Belfast, St. Malachy's	371,703	10
Belfast, Strathearn	195,371	15
Belfast, Victoria	263,889	82
Coleraine Institution	338,447	164
Coleraine Convent	227,603	16
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's	88,963	33
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's	164,130	6
Dungannon Royal	293,618	30
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boys'	165,757	3
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girls	161,053	8
Dunmurry, Rathmore	323,323	14
Enniskillen Convent	195,706	3
Enniskillen, Portora	215,951	32
Enniskillen, St. Michael's	214,853	11
Garron Tower, St. Macnissis	184,833	40
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	313,564	28
Kilkeel, St. Louis	117,839	31
Larne Grammar	218,652	14
Lisburn, Friends	284,453	48
Lisburn, The Wallace	359,369	18
Londonderry, Foyle College	266,917	43
Londonderry, St. Columb's	500,151	7
Londonderry, Thornhill College	393,593	10
Lurgan, St. Michael's	151,672	6
Magherafelt, Rainey Endowed	191,982	13
Magherafelt, St. Mary's	257,930	8
Newry Christian Brothers	212,223	4
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	170,068	7
Newry Sacred Heart	213,753	8
Newry, St. Coleman's	216,368	18
Omagh Christian Brothers	205,876	2
Omagh, Loreto Convent	241,616	5
Portstewart Dominican	125,810	71
Strabane Convent	145,188	7

Note: In addition to normal category B block grant allocations the above figures include grants for the vocational educational programme, free books and materials and special grants paid in relation to GCSE and one-off items of maintenance.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available in respect of category B expenditure grants to each of the voluntary grammar schools and their numbers of fee-paying and non-fee-paying pupils for the current school year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest information is as follows:

School	Category B grants payable £	Fee paying pupils	Non-fee paying pupils
Armagh Royal	235,254	43	463
Armagh, St. Patrick's College	254,687	85	652
Ballymena Academy	368,114	30	1,116
Ballymena, St. Louis	258,247	6	898
Ballymoney, Dalriada	272,287	15	765
Ballynahinch Assumption	222,593	8	678
Bangor Grammar	291,125	42	848
Belfast, Bloomfield	156,749	30	493
Belfast, Campbell	416,349	120	452
Belfast, Christian Brothers	403,240	19	1,110
Belfast Dominican	247,996	23	736
Belfast High School	239,922	12	742
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	177,444	185	508
Belfast, Methodist College	738,700	150	1,390
Belfast, Our Lady and St. Patrick's	339,956	14	907
Belfast, Royal Belfast Academical Institution	473,319	50	865
Belfast Royal Academy	603,559	61	1,197
Belfast, St. Dominic's	316,209	22	900
Belfast, St. Malachy's	370,301	10	901
Belfast, Strathearn	196,098	10	588
Belfast, Victoria	239,833	82	593
Coleraine Academical Institution	340,533	154	832
Coleraine Convent	222,838	21	674
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's	89,552	28	264
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's	160,461	6	572
Dungannon, Royal	293,607	27	543
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boy's	169,033	6	715
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girl's	163,568	14	651
Dunmurry, Rathmore	319,492	13	1,016
Enniskillen Convent	187,564	3	702
Enniskillen, Portora	216,019	29	303
Enniskillen, St. Michael's	213,546	10	660
Garron Tower, St. Macnissis	185,739	28	513
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	309,217	22	973
Kilkeel, St. Louis	126,957	0	325
Larne Grammar	211,775	18	625
Lisburn, Friends	280,914	47	814
Lisburn, The Wallace	363,561	14	1,072
Londonderry, Foyle College	269,790	25	736
Londonderry, St. Columb's	492,932	11	1,556
Londonderry, Thornhill College	386,350	16	1,213
Lurgan, St. Michael's	144,694	7	426
Magherafelt, Rainey Endowed	188,894	8	505
Magherafelt, St. Mary's	254,988	14	942
Newry, Christian Brothers	207,851	10	705
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	168,553	1	753
Newry Sacred Heart	214,456	11	762
Newry, St. Coleman's	210,322	27	741
Omagh Christian Brothers	201,567	6	744
Omagh, Loreto Convent	235,014	11	770
Portstewart Dominican	135,737	50	324
Strabane Convent	140,397	7	444

Note:

In addition to normal category B grants, the figures include grants for the vocational education programme and free books and materials but exclude any special grants which may be paid on GCSE and one-off items of maintenance.

Firearms

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of legally held firearms in Northern Ireland, stolen by area in so far as figures are available.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Information is not compiled in the exact form requested. Available information is as follows:

Period: 1 January 1984-5 December 1988

Police division	Firearms stolen	Miscellaneous weapons[1] stolen	Totals
A	16	3	19
B	20	3	23
D	81	13	94
E	72	20	92
G	59	6	65
H	69	8	77
J	56	13	69
K	42	5	47
L	34	1	35
N	34	5	39
O	190	4	194
P	61	6	67

[1] Includes airguns, starting pistols, flare guns, humane killer, antique weapons and crossbows.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste Sites

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many toxic waste sites there are in the county of South Yorkshire; and if he will list them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a record of some 257 waste disposal facilities in South Yorkshire. Details of the sites, including information on types of waste for which they are licensed, can be obtained from the appropriate waste disposal authorities, which are required to maintain a public register.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list toxic waste sites throughout the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a record of some 5,530 waste disposal facilities in England, Wales and Scotland. Details of the sites, including information on the types of waste for which they are licensed, can be obtained from the appropriate waste disposal authorities, which are required to maintain a public register.

Rating Reform

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the powers to be given to council officials to enforce payment of the poll tax.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a "poll tax". Where someone has defaulted on the community charge, a local authority will be able to enforce payment once it has obtained an order from a magistrate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of households and tax units gaining or losing when domestic rates are fully replaced by the community charge in England and Wales, assuming that the social security arrangements prior to the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 are in operation in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 22 October 1986, *Official Report*, columns *871-72*.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1988]*: No. Illustrative community charge figures published by the Government have always been on the basis of the tax and benefit rates in force at the time of publication. I have not been prepared to proceed by hypothetical example—either in forecasting the future or by "what if?" versions of history. Figures I have placed in the Library show that 58 per cent. of households will pay less with community charge than with rates.

Building Research Establishment

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many items of correspondence he has received about the work of the Building Research Establishment from hon. Members since 1 July.

Mr. Trippier: I have received one letter relating particularly to the work of the Building Research Establishment. I receive others on a range of subjects, which draw on the establishment's published results and advice. If the hon. Member has a specific point in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

River Thames (Expenditure)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of money spent in each of the last five years on improving the water condition of the river Thames.

Mr. Moynihan: Specific estimates for expenditure on improving the water quality of the Thames over the past five years are not available. However, total capital and operating expenditure over this period by the Thames water authority on sewage treatment and disposal, water quality regulation and pollution prevention was as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	122
1984-85	123
1985-86	122
1986-87	122
1987-88	140

Council House Rents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when preparing the proposals contained in his consultation paper on capital expenditure and finance, what assessment he made of their likely effect on council house rents in *(a)* Nottingham and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Trippier: In light of my right hon. Friend's subsequent proposals for a new financial regime for local authority housing, I would not expect the proposals in the consultation paper on local authority capital expenditure and finance to have any significant effect on council house rents either in Nottingham or nationally.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 12 December concerning disposing of nuclear waste, how many litres of high-level waste are awaiting permanent disposal.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the equivalent of 517,000 litres of conditioned high-level wastes are currently in store.

UN (Emergencies)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has responded to President Gorbachev's call for a special United Nations environmental agency to give advice and help in emergency situations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside has announced the Government's response to Mr. Gorbachev's proposals for environmental action. A copy of his statement of 9 December will be placed in the Library.

Football (Membership Scheme)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how overseas visitors will obtain entry to football grounds when a membership entry card is essential for entry.

Mr. Moynihan: This issue is discussed in the report of my working party on the national membership scheme, published on 9 November. The report recommends that clubs should be able to make temporary membership arrangements for overseas visitors to a Football League match and that such visitors should be required to produce proof of identity to gain entry to an international match. These are matters that will be considered further when our legislative proposals are published.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision there will be under the football national membership scheme for football fans who do not support any one team in particular;

(2) what measures he intends to take, under the football national membership scheme, to prevent *(a)* the use of stolen cards *(b)* the borrowing of cards and *(c)* applications for cards in bogus names;

(3) if he has made any estimate as to the proportion of those who attend football matches occasionally who will register under the national membership scheme;

(4) when he expects to bring forward legislation for a national football membership scheme;

(5) whether he intends to bring forward legislation which gives him the power to require that non-football sporting events should be open only to spectators who are members of a national membership scheme;

(6) whether the forthcoming Bill for a football national membership scheme will allow for the extension of the scheme to Scotland and Northern Ireland without further legislation;

(7) what provision he intends to make in the Bill for a football national membership scheme, for Football Association cup ties between league and non-league sides;

(8) what redress there will be for those refused access to a football match due to incorrect information held by the football membership authority;

(9) to what extent the football membership authority will rely, in avoiding multiple membership applications and applications in false names, on cross reference of information with *(a)* the police computer, *(b)* local authorities' poll tax registers, *(c)* the Inland Revenue, *(d)* the Department of Social Security and *(e)* data bases held by private organisations;

(10) whether those committing football-related offences would lose their membership of the football national membership scheme, on committing an offence, on being charged, or on conviction.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's proposals for legislation to establish a national membership scheme for football supporters will be published shortly. It will be for the body appointed to run the scheme to consider the way in which the scheme will work in detail and submit proposals to the Secretary of State for approval. The report of the working party which I chaired made recommendations on a number of the points raised by the hon. and learned Gentleman. It also recommended that the principles of the Data Protection Act 1984 should be applied to the scheme.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has, in the light of his intention to introduce a national identity card scheme for football clubs, on the net indebtedness of division IV Football Association clubs;

(2) what information he has in the light of his intention to introduce a national identity card scheme for football clubs, on the net indebtedness of division III Football Association clubs;

(3) what information he has, in the light of his intention to introduce a national identity card scheme for football clubs, on the losses and profits of the clubs in division III of the Football Association during each of the last three seasons;

(4) what information he has, in the light of his intention to introduce a national identity card scheme for football clubs, of the profits and losses of the clubs in division IV of the Football Association in each of the last three seasons.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 6 December 1988]*: My Department does not receive the financial accounts of Football League clubs. It might be possible to provide the information requested by my hon. Friend from the information held at Companies House, but only at disproportionate cost.

Waterfries School

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, when he proposes to reply to the letter dated 10 October from the hon. Member for Woolwich about Waterfries school and Thamesmead town hall.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I wrote to the hon. Member on 16 December. I am sorry he has not had an earlier reply.

Public Works Departments

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any assessment of the extra costs and the effects on flexibility of the abolition of the free allowances in the tendering by local authority public works departments for small jobs; if he has made any estimate of the circumstances in which the additional overheads in obtaining tenders for small jobs will exceed the value of the work; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is our firm belief that the benefits to be derived from opening up all buildings and maintenance work to free competition, whilst preserving the ability for authorities to continue to carry out work through their own staff where that can be shown to be cost-effective, will substantially outweigh any transitional costs that might be involved.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has issued guidance on what constitutes an emergency for the purposes of local authority public works departments carrying out works without going out to tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Regulations made under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 state:

"'emergency work' means work of any description whose necessity could not reasonably have been foreseen by a local authority or development body and which is required to avert, alleviate or eradicate in their area, or any part, if the effects or potential effects of any emergency or disaster involving or likely to involve risk of serious damage to or destruction of property or risk of injury or danger to health or life".

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, announced in reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 7 December at column *200* that we were currently examining the scope for restricting the kinds of emergency work which can be carried out by direct labour organisations without open competition. We have no intention of restricting the ability of authorities to respond to genuine emergencies.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any information on the effectiveness of compulsory competitive tendering in local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no specific information available as yet on the outcome of compulsory tendering for building and maintenance work under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, although I understand that the Audit Commission intends to publish a study on this next year. The date by which compulsory tendering for the first group of other services under the Local Government Act 1988 must be completed is 1 August 1989. It is however already clear that, to meet the challenge of competition, local authorities are radically overhauling their organisation, staffing and terms and conditions of service. The best guide we have to the effectiveness of tendering in local government comes from the voluntary exercises carried out by several authorities, including a recent Audit Commission study on ground maintenance. These show that savings of up to 30 per cent. of previous cost can be achieved for the same standard of service.

Needs Assessment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the paper entitled "Consultation Paper on the New Method of Needs Assessment" will be available to right hon. and hon. Members.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has circulated a paper (LGF(G)(NG)(88)7) to officials of the local authority associations setting out preliminary proposals for the simplified needs assessment for the distribution of needs grant. These proposals will be discussed in a series of meetings under the auspices of the new systems working group. A copy of the paper has been placed in the Library.

Derelict Land Grants (Computerisation)

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when the management information system with regard to the control of the derelict land grant programme will be fully computerised;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delays in computerising the management information system with regard to the control of the derelict land grant programme, and the costs to the Department associated with these delays;

(3) what is the estimated total cost to his Department of the computerisation of the management information system with regard to the control of the derelict land grant programme;

(4) what is the total cost to date to his Department of the computerisation of the management information system with regard to the control of the derelict land grant programme;

(5) what make and type of computers are being installed to ensure the computeristion of the management information system with regard to the control of the derelict land grant programme;

(6) if he will outline the reasons for the withdrawing in March 1988 of the pilot system for the computerisation of the management information system with regard to the control of the derelict land grant programme.

Mr. Trippier: It is planned to complete implementation of a computerised system for derelict land grant by the end of 1989. In addition to providing comprehensive management information, the system will lead to increased efficiency in managing the derelict land grant programme, handling derelict land grant applications and processing grant claims.

When the pilot system was initiated in 1983, the evolution of an information technology strategy within the Department was at an early stage. Management techniques now in operation are designed to ensure that projects are properly programmed and resourced, and to trigger early corrective action when necessary. Progress with the pilot system was therefore slower than it should have been had these techniques been in use.

By 1987, the scope and design of the original user requirement for the pilot project had been overtaken by a comprehensive review of derelict land grant policy, the implementation of delegated authority under the financial management initiative, and recommendations from an internal audit examination of derelict land grant procedures. A feasibility study completed in March 1988 found that the system required considerable further development to cope with new requirements brought about by those changes, and concluded that it would be more cost-effective to redesign the system using modern software. The pilot system cost £130,000, but valuable experience was gained from design work and data analysis which is being applied to the new project.

The total cost of computerisation to date is £230,000, including the cost of the pilot project. The final total cost of developing and implementing the system is estimated to be £590,000. The project is expected to achieve quantifiable benefits of the order of £250,000 per annum, together with substantial unquantifiable benefits.

Existing VAX computers, manufactured by the Digital Equipment Corporation and located at the Department's bureaux sites in London and Swansea, will be utilised. The only new hardware to be purchased will be 30 DEC VT 320 computer terminals and 28 DEC LA75 desk top printers for use in the Department's regional offices and headquarters. The terminals will be linked to the bureaux via the existing departmental data communications network.

Exeter Airport

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on the future development of Exeter airport following the recent public inquiry.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend expects to announce his decision on the application for shopping, leisure, business and other uses on part of Exeter airport shortly.

Chelsea Football Ground

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his inspector's decision on the planning application for Chelsea football ground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The inspector's report is being considered. The decision will be issued as quickly as possible.

River Tees (Barrage)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last discussed the construction of a barrage on the River Tees with the chairman of the Teesside development corporation; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Trippier: The Secretary of State has not discussed the proposal with the chairman of the Teesside development corporation, but there have been discussions between the Department and the corporation at official level, and the Secretary of State was content for the private Bill to be laid.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses have been received by the Teesside development corporation to the consultation carried out with regard to the proposal to build a barrage on the River Tees.

Mr. Trippier: Teesside development corporation has, to date, received over 140 replies to the questionnaire (and information leaflet) on the proposed barrage, which were distributed to all households in the Stockton area. The corporation has also received a substantial response to its consultation with private companies, local and public authorities, and appropriate local and national bodies. In addition, the corporation has held three public meetings and has, on request, discussed its proposals at separate meetings with various organisations and individuals.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to undertake a full environmental assessment study of the proposal by the Teesside development corporation to build a barrage on the River Tees.

Mr. Trippier: Since the Tees barrage proposal would be approved by a private Act of Parliament, the provisions of the European Community directive on environmental assessment and the regulations implementing it do not apply. However, I understand that the Teesside development corporation has commissioned the preparation of an environmental assessment.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many objections have been lodged against the proposal by the Teesside development corporation to build a barrage on the River Tees.

Mr. Trippier: No objections to the River Tees barrage and crossing private Bill have yet been lodged.

Structure Plans

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is giving to district and parish councils following his decision to abolish structure plans as drawn by county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The proposal to replace structure plans with briefer statements of county planning policies was included in the Government's consultation paper "The Future of Development Plans", issued in September 1986. We shall shortly be announcing our conclusions in the light of that consultation.

Planning policy guidance note No. 12, on local plans, was issued on 30 November. It urges district planning authorities to extend the coverage of statutory local plans. It also makes clear that work done on local plans would not be lost in any new system of development plans, since provision would be made to enable up-to-date local plans to be carried over into the new system.

Teesside Development Corporation

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money is paid to Councillor Michael Carr in respect to his position on the board of the Teesside development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: As a member of the board of Teesside development corporation, Councillor Michael Carr receives £3,820 per annum.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take concerning the position of Councillor Michael Carr as a member of the board of the Teesside development corporation who is also a member of a sub-committee of Middlesbrough borough council responsible for formulating objections to the Tees barrage private Bill proposed by the development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: None. Councillor Carr has stated publicly that there is no difference between the council and the corporation on the principle of creating a Tees barrage and has expressed his strong personal support for the proposal. There are certain elements of the proposal which Middlesbrough borough council wishes to explore further and Teesside development corporation has agreed to discuss these.

Historic Churches

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will publish tables listing *(a)* the churches which were offered grants and *(b)* the value of each grant under sections 3(a) and 5(b) of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953, in each of the prior five years;

(2) whether he will publish tables listing *(a)* the churches which applied for grants and *(b)* the value of these applications under sections 3(a) and 5(b) of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The grant schemes for repair of historic churches are administered by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission ('English Heritage'). Over the last five years, there have been some 2,300 applications, and some 1,850 grants offered totalling over £25 million in value. It is not possible in the time available to list all in detail. I have asked the chairman of English Heritage to write to the hon. Member with more detailed information.

Rate Limitation

Mr. William Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has reached decisions on any applications by councils in England subject to selective rate limitation in 1989-90 for their expenditure level to be redetermined; if he will announce the proposed rate limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Five of the seven councils in England designated for selective rate limitation in 1989-90 applied

for redetermination of their expenditure level. These were the London boroughs of Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. After careful consideration of these applications and of other relevant matters, I have decided to redetermine expenditure levels upwards in four cases: Greenwich by £2 million, Hackney by £2 million, Southwark by £6 million and Tower Hamlets by £1 million. In the case of Camden, I have decided to confirm the original expenditure level. I am also today sending notification to each of the seven designated councils of the proposed rate limit which I have determined for 1989-90. These limits are based on the original expenditure level or redetermined level as the case may be, and for Greenwich and Southwark include an allowance of £5 million for an addition to financial reserves to cover effects of the supplementary reports. The details are as follows:

	Original expenditure level £ million	*Redetermined expenditure level £ million*	*Rate limit pence*	*Implied change in local rate Per cent.*
Camden	136·924	—	114·22	−2·4
Greenwich	95·230	97·230	150·85	+10·9
Hackney	128·572	130·572	102·17	−24·2
Lewisham	115·594	—	110·76	−15·9
Southwark	134·193	140·193	93·45	−7·5
Tower Hamlets	124·033	125·033	65·53	−46·8
Thamesdown	14·201	—	47·58	−6·9

Associated with each of the four increases to expenditure levels is a requirement as follows:

(a) Greenwich
To report at intervals to the Secretary of State on its expenditure on personal social services;

(b) Hackney
To review and to report at intervals to the Secretary of State on its financial management in respect of its housing accommodation;

(c) Southwark
To review its financial management of rent collection and to report at intervals to the Secretary of State on this and on its expenditure and financial management generally;

(d) Tower Hamlets
To review its general financial management and to report at intervals to the Secretary of State on this and on its expenditure on personal social services and homelessness.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals for the reorganisation of local government involving the district and shire counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None whatsoever. The Government's recent legislation, together with the proposals we are bringing forward this Session, presents local authorities with a major challenge to make themselves more efficient and accountable to their electorate. These are the priorities for the next few years. Further changes in local government structure form no part of our agenda.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Wray To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many petrol stations in Scotland sell unleaded petrol; what is the average price per gallon; and what is the average price of a gallon of leaded petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: According to the most recent information supplied by the oil companies, on 28 October 1988 there were 190 petrol stations in Scotland selling unleaded petrol. The number is growing all the time. Average fuel prices are monitored by the Automobile Association. The United Kingdom average fuel prices as at 8 December 1988 for a gallon of petrol were as follows:

	£
unleaded	165·9
2-star leaded	167·4
4-star leaded	170·3

Waste Imports

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what types and what quantities of waste are being imported into Britain each year since the introduction of new regulations in response to incidents involving the vessel Karin B; and what types of quantities of waste were imported each year previous to this.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 December 1988]*: The Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 were made on 8 September, having been delayed by our earlier attempts to secure Community agreement to a wider coverage. No figures are yet available of notifications made under these regulations.

Special waste imports since 1981-82 are estimated at:

	Quantity
1981-82	3,800
1982-83	5,000
1983-84	14,800
1984-85	5,000
1985-86	24,500
1986-87	52,000
1987-88	80,000

These figures compare with special waste arisings in England and Wales of 1·6 million tonnes per annum.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information has been provided by *(a)* British Nuclear Fuels plc, *(b)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, *(c)* the Central Electricity Generating Board and *(d)* the South of Scotland Electricity Board to the European Commission under article 37 of the Euratom Treaty since May 1979 on the subject of nuclear waste disposal; and if he will list by date all submissions made by each of the nuclear facility

operators to Euratom under article 37 of the Euratom Treaty since there has been a requirement to make such data available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* There have been no submissions since 15 February 1988. Under article 37 of the Euratom treaty, responsibility for making submissions to the European Commission concerning plans for the disposal of radioactive waste rests with Her Majesty's Government, not the operators of nuclear installations.

The information, which is supplied by the Department of the Environment on behalf of the nuclear site operators to the Commission under article 37 of the Euratom treaty, conforms to the regulations laid down by the Commission in the *Official Journal* of the European Community dated 29 March 1982 (ref No. L83/15), a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library. The following submissions have been made to the Commission since May 1979:

	Date
(a) British Nuclear Fuels plc:	
Capenhurst—Uranium Enrichment Plants	May 1981
Sellafield—Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant	June 1984
(b) United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	
Dounreay—PFR Fuel Reprocessing Plant	November 1979
(c) Central Electricity Generating Board	
Heysham 1—Nuclear Power Station	May 1980
Heysham 2—Nuclear Power Station	January 1986
Sizewell "B"—Nuclear Power Station	November 1987
(d) South of Scotland Electricity Board	
Torness Power Station	February 1986

Submissions made prior to May 1979 under Article 37 are as follows:

Central Electricity Generating Board	
Hinkley Point "B" Power Station	1974
Dungeness "B" Power Station	1976
Hartlepool Power Station	1978
South of Scotland Electricity Board	
Hunterston "B" Power Station	1974

Exchequer Grant

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show for each year from 1980-81 to 1988-89, at constant prices, aggregate Exchequer grant per capita in *(a)* shire areas, *(b)* metropolitan districts excluding London boroughs, *(c)* inner London boroughs and *(d)* outer London boroughs.

Mr. John Gummer *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The available information is as follows:

Aggregate Exchequer Grant[1] Per Capita[2] £ (1988-89 Prices)

	1981-82[3]	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87[4]*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Shire Areas	295	274	269	268	239	230	229	220
Metropolitan Districts	295	278	282	277	264	290	296	292
Inner London Boroughs (including City of London)	233	246	244	222	244	342	338	326
Outer London Boroughs	260	263	250	248	236	248	258	260

[1] AEG currently being paid to authorities. These are final amounts for 1981-82 to 1984-85. Cash values per capita have been converted to constant 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

[2] Per capita figures have been derived by taking total population mid year estimates supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

[3] Information is not readily available on a comparable basis for the year 1980-81—the year before the present Rate Support Grant System was introduced.

[4] Figures for Metropolitan Districts and Inner and Outer London Boroughs for 1986-87 and following years are not comparable with earlier years because of the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils.

Disposal Notices

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites on the register on which he has had a request from a company or individual for a disposal notice to be served.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Requests for my right hon. Friend to direct the owners to dispose of their interest in the land have been received in respect of the following sites, which are entered on the register of unused and underused publicly owned land:

Berkshire
Thalassa, New Road, Bracknell
Rosemount, New Road/London Road, Bracknell
Land at Henwick Lane, Thatcham near Newbury

Cheshire
Land off Hoole Lane, Chester
Pine Lodge, Liverpool Road, Chester
Land at Melrose Park (formerly Shed Lane), Vicars Cross, Chester
Land at Bulkeley County Primary School, Mill Lane, Bulkeley
Land at the eastern end of Crewe and Alsager College of Further Education, Crewe Road, Crewe
Land at the junction of South Street and Nantwich Road, Crewe
Former Hibel Road and North Staffs Goods Yard, Macclesfield
Land at Palmerston Street, Bollington, near Macclesfield

Derbyshire
Flowery Leys Lane, Alfreton, Amber Valley
Hands Road/Aldreds Lane, Heanor, Amber Valley
Chuch Street, Riddings, Amber Valley
Greenhill Lane, Riddings
Waingroves Road, Waingroves, Ripley, Amber Valley

Devon
Land at Old Laira Road/Laira Avenue, Plymouth

Dorset
Land at Breach Close, Bowton, North Dorset
Stephen's Castle, Verwood, Wimborne
Land fronting Newton Road and Manor Road, Verwood, Wimborne

East Sussex
Land at Upper Broomgrove Road, Hastings
Land at New Road, Newhaven, Lewes

Greater London
Land between Nos 102 and 108 Gordon Avenue, Stanmore Middlesex
Land at King George Street, Greenwich
Orient Street development area, London SE11

Greater Manchester
Former Goods Yard, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester
Land at Sale Road/Ossington Walk, Manchester
Land south of Boothsbank Avenue, Boothstown, Salford
Land at Ellesmere Park, Salford
Bryn Road/Nicholmere Avenue, Aston-in-Makerfield, Salford
Land adjacent to and to the rear of Faulders Mill, Stockport
Hesketh Meadows, off Newton Road, Lowton, Wigan

Hereford and Worcester
Site 6 Estate, Droitwich Road, Rushock, near Droitwich

Hertfordshire
Manor Street, Berkhamsted

Humberside
Land at Bond Street, Kingston-upon-Hull
Land at Oak Road, Kingston upon Hull
Land at Louis Street, Kingston upon Hull
Land at Marfleet Lane, Kingston upon Hull

Isle of Wight
Land on the east side of Quarry Road, Isle of Wight

Kent
Western Heights, Dover
College Road, Hextable, Sevenoaks

Lancashire
Land lying to the south east of the Brierfield Interchange and to the West of Lamberts Timber Yard, Brierfield, Pendle Rees Park, Junction Lane, Burscough, West Lancashire
Hesketh Road, Burscough, West Lancashire

Leicestershire
Land off St. Matthews Way, Leicester (2 sites)
Former Railway Station Buildings, Moira, North West Leicestershire

Northamptonshire
Land at Oundle Pumping Station, Oundle, East Northamptonshire

North Yorkshire
Land at Tadcaster Road, Dringhouses, York
Land at Burdyke Avenue, York
Land at Pigeon Cote Farm, Ryedale
Land at Land adjoining Oakdale Golf Club, Harrogate
Land at Kirby Road, Ripon
Land at Low Stokesby, Scarborough

Shropshire
Land off Racecourse Land, Bicton Heath, Shrewsbury
Land off Longden Road, Shrewsbury
Land off Alexandra Avenue, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury
Land at Radbrook Road, Shrewsbury
Land off Radbrook Road, Shrewsbury
Land at Raby Crescent, Belle Vue, Shrewsbury

Somerset
Creechbarrow Road, Taunton

South Yorkshire
Land off Hall Street, Barnburgh, Doncaster
Tickhill Road, Balby, Doncaster
Orchard Street, Balby, Doncaster
Rostholme, Bentley, Doncaster
Land adjacent to St. Catherine's Hospital, Tickhill Road, Balby
Land bounded by Kimberworth Road, Midland Road and Devonshire Street, Rotherham
Beighton Road, Woodhouse, Sheffield
Plumbley Lane, Mosborough, Sheffield
Smithy Wood Tip, Sheffield
Land adjacent to Chesterfield Road and Little London Road, Sheffield
Land adjoining Chapeltown Nursing Home, Steven Crescent, Chapeltown, Sheffield
Land off Gleadless Road, Gleadless, Sheffield
Land on Stradbroke Road, Handsworth, Sheffield
Land at Middlewood Hospital, Sheffield
Bagshaw's Road/Woodhouse Road, Intake, Sheffield
Land off Beighton Road, Woodhouse, Sheffield
Land off Donetsk Way, Mosborough, Sheffield
Shirland Lane/Darnall Road (Wilstrop Road), Sheffield
John Calvert Road/Greengate Road, Woodhouse, Sheffield
Richards Road, Heeley, Sheffield
Tyler Street/Tipton Street, Sheffield
Land on Main Road, Darnal, Sheffield
Harleston Street/Petre Street/Lyons Road, Sheffield
Ashberry Road/Bannon Street, Sheffield
Land at Sunny Bank/Broomhill Place, Sheffield
Bridlestiles, Mosborough Village, Sheffield
Cherry Tree Street, Hoyland, Barnsley
Elizabeth Street, Hoyland, Barnsley
Fish Dam Lane, Carlton, Barnsley
Goodison Boulevard, Cautley, Doncaster
Broadway, Dunscroft, Doncaster
Land to the rear of Crescent East/Flanderwell Lane, Sunnyside, Rotherham
Beckton Avenue, Waterthorpe, Sheffield
Eccleshall Hill, High Green, Sheffield
Rushley Avenue, Dore, Sheffield

Staffordshire
Land at Laddedge, Leek, adjacent to the River Churnet
Land fronting Longshaw Street, opposite Longport Flats, Stoke-on-Trent

Surrey
Land at Felix Road, Walton-on-Thames, Elmbridge
St. Chad's, St. Mary's Road, Long Ditton, Elmbridge
Site of Tollgate House, Epsom Road, Merrow, Guildford

West Midlands
Titford Road, Oldbury, Sandwell
Former Patent Shaft Steel Works, Leabrook Road, Wednesbury, Sandwell
Land at Moorcroft Tip, Wednesbury, Sandwell
Land to the north-east of Tennyson Road/Keats Road, The Scotlands, Wolverhampton (2 sites)

West Sussex
Northgate—land south of Crawley Avenue (west of Woolborough Lane) Crawley
Site adjoining Pelham Place, Broadfield, Crawley
Flatiron Site, Northgage Avenue, Woodfield Road, Crawley

West Yorkshire
Oakworth Road, Keighley
Thornton View Road, Bradford
Paley Road, East Bowling, Bradford
Cottingley Road, Cottingley, Bradford
Skipton Road, Ilkley
Moorside Road, Eccleshill, Bradford
Oakleigh Road, Clayton, Bradford
Morton Banks Hospital, Bradford
Westwood Hospital, Queensbury, Bradford
Bierley Hall Hospital, Bierley Lane, Bradford
Northgate/Watercroft/Fenay Lane, Almondbury, Huddersfield
Heaton Road, Paddock, Huddersfield
South Street, Netherton, Huddersfield
Springwood Hall Gardens, Huddersfield
Ring Road, Charwell, Leeds
Kirkstall Lane, Leeds
Temple Newsam, Leeds
Ackroyd Street, Morley, Leeds
East side of Ninelands Lane, Garforth, Leeds
North of Owlcotes Road and Cemetary Road, Pudsey, Leeds
North east of Holt Lane, Leeds
Land between Lowtown and Mount Pleasant Road, Pudsey,

Leeds
East of Leeds Road, Methley, Leeds
North of Holmsley Lane, Woodlerford, Leeds
Tingley Crescent, West Ardsley, Leeds
Land adjoining Henshaw Lane, Yeadon, Leeds
Lumby Lane, Otley, Leeds
Burras Lane, Otley, Leeds
West of Garden House Lane, East Ardsley, Leeds
Oddy's Fold, Parkside Road, Leeds
Halmesley Lane, Rothwell, Leeds
Rouhdhay Hall Hospital, Jackson Avenue, Leeds
Saint Georges Hospital, Wood Lane, Rothwell
Oakes Street, Flanshaw Lane, Wakefield
Westbourne Road, Manningham, Bradford.

Football Statistics

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list English League football clubs together with the following information for each of them during the 1987-88 season: the number of matches played at their grounds, the total season's attendance, the total arrests in association with such matches, the average attendance per match, the average number of arrests per match and the arrests as a proportion of the attendance; and if he will make a statement about the numbers of charges and convictions which have arisen from such arrests.

Mr. Moynihan: The information that follows relates to Football League matches played in the 1987-88 season. The figures on the matches played, total attendances, and total arrests have been collected by the Association of Chief Police Officers. Comparable figures are not available for charges nor for convictions arising from the arrests.

In addition to those arrested at Football League grounds in the 1987-88 season, 6,542 were ejected from the grounds. Clearly, neither the ejections nor arrests reflect the substantially greater number of incidents of violence, hooliganism and vandalism at Football League grounds. Furthermore, the police view remains that many matches provide the focus for aggressive and provocative behaviour with violence never far below the surface.

First division

Club	*Matches*	*Total attendance*	*Total arrests*	*Average attendance per match*	*Average arrests per match*	*Arrests as a proportion of attendance (per cent.)*
Arsenal	20	598,059	153	29,903	7·65	0·03
Charlton	20	173,629	14	8,682	0·70	0·01
Chelsea	20	408,538	271	20,427	13·55	0·07
Coventry	20	350,165	194	17,508	9·70	0·06
Derby County	20	343,107	86	17,155	4·30	0·03
Everton	20	555,692	24	27,785	1·20	0·004
Liverpool	20	791,977	33	39,599	1·65	0·004
Luton	20	161,884	1	8,094	0·05	0·0006
Manchester United	20	783,099	38	39,155	1·90	0·005
Newcastle United	20	419,742	149	20,987	7·45	0·04
Norwich	20	313,904	32	15,695	1·60	0·01
Nottingham Forest	20	384,648	130	19,232	6·50	0·03
Oxford United	20	218,632	105	10,931	5·25	0·05
Portsmouth	20	324,780	282	16,239	14·10	0·09
Queens Park Rangers	20	265,813	91	13,290	4·55	0·03
Sheffield Wednesday	20	395,519	90	19,776	4·50	0·02
Southampton	20	290,617	208	14,531	10·40	0·07
Tottenham Hotspur	20	517,970	74	25,899	3·70	0·01
Watford	20	291,464	43	14,573	2·15	0·01
Wimbledon	20	159,691	49	7,985	2·45	0·03
West Ham	20	396,473	149	19,824	7·45	0·04

2nd Division

Club	*Matches*	*Total attendance*	*Total arrests*	*Average attendance per match*	*Average arrests per match*	*Arrests as a proportion of attendance (per cent.)*
Aston Villa	22	403,836	308	18,356	14·00	0·08
Barnsley	22	168,339	55	7,652	2·50	0·03
Birmingham	22	188,722	101	8,578	4·59	0·05
Blackburn	22	211,120	79	9,596	3·60	0·04
Bournemouth	22	168,757	149	7,671	6·77	0·09
Bradford City	22	285,509	197	12,978	8·96	0·07
Crystal Palace	22	215,496	78	9,795	3·55	0·04
Huddersfield	22	150,334	126	6,833	5·73	0·08
Hull City	22	157,507	38	7,159	1·73	0·02
Ipswich	22	258,037	99	11,729	4·50	0·04
Leeds United	22	443,094	184	20,141	8·36	0·04
Leicester City	22	223,049	81	10,139	3·68	0·04
Manchester City	22	428,655	35	19,484	1·59	0·01
Middlesbrough	22	321,219	110	14,601	5·00	0·03
Millwall	22	185,165	44	8,417	2·00	0·02
Oldham Athletic	22	147,995	19	6,727	0·86	0·01
Plymouth	22	226,152	29	10,280	1·32	0·01
Reading	22	150,352	20	6,834	0·91	0·01
Sheffield United	22	223,960	60	10,180	2·73	0·03
Shrewsbury	22	108,202	68	4,918	3·10	0·06
Stoke City	22	211,234	57	9,602	2·59	0·03

Club	Matches	Total attendance	Total arrests	Average attendance per match	Average arrests per match	Arrests as a proportion of attendance (per cent.)
Swindon	22	209,800	67	9,536	3·05	0·03
West Bromwich	22	222,261	132	10,103	6·00	0·06

3rd Division

Club	Matches	Total attendance	Total arrests	Average attendance per match	Average arrests per match	Arrests as a proportion of attendance (per cent.)
Aldershot	23	70,642	39	3,071	1·7	0·06
Blackpool	23	96,935	36	4,214	1·6	0·04
Brentford	23	105,430	72	4,583	3·1	0·07
Brighton and Hove Albion	23	205,263	34	8,924	1·5	0·02
Bristol City	23	225,861	21	9,820	0·9	0·01
Bristol Rovers	23	84,753	18	3,684	0·8	0·02
Bury	23	58,997	5	2,565	0·2	0·01
Chester City	23	58,967	22	2,563	0·96	0·04
Chesterfield	23	61,239	21	2,662	0·91	0·03
Doncaster Rovers	23	43,223	28	1,879	1·2	0·06
Fulham	23	116,454	99	5,063	4·3	0·09
Gillingham	23	106,260	32	4,620	1·4	0·03
Grimsby Town	23	76,541	66	3,327	2·9	0·09
Mansfield Town	23	90,894	21	3,951	0·9	0·02
Northampton Town	23	126,578	11	5,503	0·5	0·01
Notts County	23	144,824	56	6,296	2·4	0·04
Port Vale	23	88,126	22	3,831	0·96	0·02
Preston North End	23	139,998	20	6,086	0·9	0·01
Rotherham United	23	84,107	47	3,656	2·0	0·05
Southampton United	23	79,320	3	3,448	0·1	0·004
Sunderland	23	400,760	80	17,424	3·5	0·02
Walsall	23	128,153	47	5,571	2·0	0·04
Wigan Athletic	23	86,776	4	3,772	0·17	0·01
York City	23	62,902	62	2,734	2·7	0·10

4th Division

Club	Matches	Total attendance	Total arrests	Average attendance per match	Average arrests per match	Arrests as a proportion of attendance (per cent.)
Bolton Wanderers	23	114,778	21	4,990	0·9	0·02
Burnley	23	144,770	90	6,294	3·9	0·06
Cambridge United	23	52,896	29	2,299	1·3	0·05
Cardiff City	23	101,752	43	4,424	1·9	0·04
Carlisle United	23	51,282	27	2,229	1·2	0·05
Colchester United	23	40,607	—	1,766	—	—
Crewe Alexandra	23	51,828	21	2,253	0·9	0·04
Darlington	23	50,374	5	2,190	0·2	0·01
Exeter City	23	56,264	83	2,446	3·6	0·15
Halifax Town	23	39,358	38	1,711	1·7	0·10
Hartlepool United	23	48,972	12	2,129	0·5	0·02
Hereford United	23	50,712	28	2,205	1·2	0·06
Newport	23	40,261	35	1,750	1·5	0·09
Leyton Orient	23	90,322	8	3,927	0·3	0·01
Peterborough United	23	71,881	15	3,125	0·7	0·02
Rochdale	23	44,903	32	1,952	1·4	0·07
Scarborough	23	70,504	146	3,065	6·3	0·21
Scunthorpe	23	74,405	46	3,235	2·0	0·06
Stockport	23	52,154	17	2,268	0·7	0·03
Swansea	23	100,957	10	4,389	0·4	0·01
Torquay United	23	67,434	21	2,932	0·9	0·03
Tranmere Rovers	23	76,847	53	3,341	2·3	0·07
Wolverhampton Wanderers	23	226,964	132	9,868	5·7	0·06
Wrexham	23	51,539	17	2,241	0·7	0·03

Sports Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many regional representatives there were on the Sports Council one year ago; how many are there now; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The 10 chairmen of the regional councils for sport and recreation were members of the Sports Council in December 1987 and had been since February 1986. Before that, it was not the practice to appoint all the regional chairmen to the council. One of the regional chairmen is currently a member of the Sports Council. The Sports Council has, however, set up a new

regional chairmen's consultative group which will meet four times a year. I will also attend these meetings in order to consult the chairmen on current Government policy where it affects sport and recreation.

Satellite Television Dishes

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what powers he intends to regulate the installation and siting of satellite television dishes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and subordinate legislation already control the installation and siting of satellite television dishes. The Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 allows one satellite antenna to be erected on a house or within its curtilage without specific planning permission provided the antenna is not more than 90 cm in diameter and does not project above the roofline of the house. Advice on the planning aspects of telecommunications development is given in planning policy guidance note 8; a copy is in the Library of the House.

WALES

Cancer

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the morbidity and mortality rates of *(a)* lung cancer, *(b)* stomach cancer, *(c)* breast cancer, *(d)* cervical cancer and *(e)* other cancers by gender and county in Wales for the years 1979 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Grist: The following tables show the latest available data in respect of (i) registration rates and (ii) crude death rates, per 100,000 resident population. The figures have not been standardised to take account of variations in the age distribution of the different populations. Fluctuations in rates can occur where rates are based on small numbers of cases.

Registered deaths from malignant neoplasms: Crude rate per 100,000 resident population

Year	Trachea, bronchus and lung		Stomach		Breast		Cervix Uteri	All other malignancies	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Females	Males	Females
Clwyd									
1979	110·5	32·1	32·9	21·7	[1]0·5	52·3	[1]9·4	164·7	148·6
1980	118·5	24·1	26·4	16·2	[1]0·5	51·1	9·8	151·8	138·9
1981	96·2	27·4	24·8	24·0	[1]0·5	56·3	9·8	165·4	138·9
1982	101·3	33·2	37·4	25·4	[1]0·5	60·1	[1]6·8	145·6	150·0
1983	92·0	33·7	25·7	23·4	[1]0·5	61·0	10·7	186·0	155·1
1984	107·9	27·8	29·3	27·8	[1]0·0	55·5	10·7	176·5	153·4
1985	120·5	36·4	30·8	17·5	[1]1·0	57·7	[1]7·8	187·3	158·1
1986	103·7	37·7	27·5	17·9	[1]0·0	63·8	[1]9·2	200·7	149·4
1987	112·0	31·2	28·8	21·1	[1]1·0	51·4	[1]7·7	170·1	158·9
Dyfed									
1979	79·9	25·2	34·7	29·9	[1]0·0	53·9	13·5	147·4	144·1
1980	106·1	19·2	33·3	18·1	[1]0·6	47·8	[1]9·3	145·6	146·8
1981	93·9	23·9	40·2	20·4	[1]0·0	51·2	[1]9·3	157·0	128·6
1982	95·4	24·4	36·5	20·4	[1]0·6	43·0	[1]8·1	151·7	136·1
1983	112·2	29·5	32·1	20·2	[1]0·0	45·6	17·3	162·8	150·2
1984	98·8	27·7	33·4	19·1	[1]0·0	54·9	[1]5·8	158·7	145·0
1985	102·3	25·9	30·2	23·6	[1]0·6	59·9	13·8	202·1	174·5
1986	96·4	26·8	34·8	21·1	[1]0·0	56·0	13·1	194·0	132·5
1987	94·6	23·7	24·1	16·9	[1]0·6	64·3	[1]5·1	198·2	150·0
Gwent									
1979	100·0	22·6	31·0	18·6	[1]0·0	39·5	[1]6·7	136·2	118·0
1980	103·6	22·2	33·8	16·8	[1]0·0	48·3	[1]6·2	136·0	113·9
1981	101·4	27·0	32·4	22·2	[1]0·0	46·5	[1]8·0	144·0	121·0
1982	106·1	31·1	32·6	25·3	[1]0·5	49·7	[1]7·5	142·0	112·3
1983	103·9	37·3	35·9	20·9	[1]0·0	45·7	[1]6·2	154·2	119·0
1984	114·2	27·1	32·6	18·7	[1]0·9	55·5	[1]5·8	160·8	124·4
1985	100·5	32·0	32·1	16·9	[1]0·5	51·9	[1]6·2	172·2	142·0
1986	107·9	29·7	29·6	16·8	[1]0·5	37·6	11·1	164·4	141·2
1987	92·4	44·1	33·7	19·4	[1]0·0	56·5	[1]6·6	191·2	141·2
Gwynedd									
1979	115·6	27·5	51·5	33·4	[1]0·9	58·4	20·0	174·3	140·1
1980	114·4	19·1	31·5	30·8	[1]0·9	44·1	[1]9·2	161·3	150·6
1981	117·1	30·8	32·4	30·8	[1]0·0	51·5	[1]11·6	175·7	140·5
1982	123·3	34·8	36·0	29·9	[1]0·9	55·6	[1]9·1	166·5	182·4
1983	121·2	31·5	45·8	32·3	[1]0·0	63·8	[1]9·1	166·1	130·2
1984	102·9	36·4	40·3	28·9	[1]0·0	67·8	[1]8·3	183·4	169·6
1985	109·4	35·5	24·0	28·1	[1]0·0	52·8	[1]10·7	192·2	172·4
1986	125·0	37·8	42·6	20·5	[1]0·0	56·7	[1]9·0	169·3	180·6
1987	124·0	38·3	38·7	26·1	[1]1·8	60·4	[1]13·1	207·6	181·9
Mid Glamorgan									
1979	108·5	22·3	37·2	24·1	[1]0·4	44·5	[1]6·8	125·6	108·1
1980	89·5	27·3	33·4	20·1	[1]0·4	56·7	9·7	138·0	124·5
1981	89·4	21·9	31·2	24·1	[1]0·0	46·4	8·3	128·9	117·9
1982	85·9	29·2	36·3	19·1	[1]0·4	51·6	9·4	153·6	124·5
1983	100·5	34·1	28·0	20·7	[1]0·0	47·2	10·5	150·3	113·9

Year	Trachea, bronchus and lung		Stomach		Breast		Cervix Uteri	All other malignancies	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Females	Males	Females
1984	100·1	32·8	36·2	19·3	[1]0·8	54·0	9·9	160·5	133·5
1985	90·0	39·1	28·8	21·9	[1]0·0	51·5	11·3	158·5	140·9
1986	105·9	39·1	34·5	20·8	[1]0·4	59·5	8·8	175·7	137·3
1987	95·4	41·6	25·7	16·8	[1]0·4	48·6	10·2	178·2	134·4
Powys									
1979	88·2	[1]14·5	38·6	[1]18·2	[1]0·0	52·7	[1]5·5	174·6	105·5
1980	82·4	[1]21·7	[1]27·5	[1]23·5	[1]1·8	48·7	[1]12·6	183·2	169·7
1981	85·5	[1]28·8	[1]27·3	[1]30·6	[1]0·0	64·9	[1]9·0	170·9	122·5
1982	94·7	[1]23·3	[1]29·1	[1]19·7	[1]1·8	43·1	[1]5·4	140·3	143·6
1983	92·6	[1]23·4	[1]34·5	[1]25·2	[1]0·0	54·1	[1]5·4	176·0	153·2
1984	66·8	[1]30·7	39·7	[1]32·5	[1]0·0	59·6	[1]1·8	182·3	144·4
1985	71·9	[1]25·1	37·8	[1]12·5	[1]0·0	53·8	[1]10·8	163·7	136·2
1986	75·1	[1]31·9	[1]17·9	[1]12·4	[1]0·0	47·9	[1]7·1	182·5	157·8
1987	99·6	[1]22·8	[1]26·7	[1]15·8	[1]0·0	50·8	[1]7·0	213·5	183·9
South Glamorgan									
1979	109·3	34·3	31·2	23·9	[1]0·5	40·8	[1]5·0	151·5	118·3
1980	96·4	30·3	33·7	20·9	[1]0·5	45·2	[1]5·0	148·6	129·7
1981	111·2	36·3	34·4	18·4	[1]0·5	54·7	[1]7·0	141·9	136·8
1982	100·8	40·8	30·8	13·9	[1]0·5	50·2	[1]7·0	153·9	129·2
1983	94·6	36·0	29·6	13·8	[1]0·5	51·9	[1]8·9	155·4	134·3
1984	103·2	33·9	30·9	22·1	[1]0·5	50·6	10·3	168·7	142·0
1985	100·5	48·1	29·3	22·6	[1]0·5	48·6	[1]9·3	164·9	161·4
1986	95·5	40·2	33·9	13·2	[1]0·0	53·5	[1]9·3	172·7	136·8
1987	93·9	44·2	25·3	13·1	[1]1·0	61·7	[1]9·2	167·7	128·8
West Glamorgan									
1979	109·3	18·8	24·3	25·5	[1]0·0	52·1	12·0	148·5	128·6
1980	112·8	24·5	38·2	19·3	[1]0·0	46·4	10·4	156·0	125·1
1981	103·3	26·6	34·4	20·4	[1]0·6	52·2	12·0	172·7	133·6
1982	109·7	30·5	31·0	19·4	[1]0·0	50·4	[1]10·0	166·6	124·0
1983	104·0	27·4	38·4	23·7	[1]0·6	52·2	[1]4·7	167·3	140·2
1984	109·7	25·4	34·7	20·1	[1]1·1	56·2	[1]5·3	175·7	150·0
1985	92·8	27·1	25·0	15·9	[1]0·0	49·9	[1]8·5	203·8	141·7
1986	112·3	29·8	30·2	18·6	[1]0·6	48·4	[1]7·4	185·3	152·6
1987	110·1	38·3	25·1	9·6	[1]0·0	52·2	13·3	184·3	161·3

[1] Rate based on fewer than 20 deaths.

International classification of diseases, injuries and causes of death, 1975 which came into operation in 1979.

SITE—Code/S

Trachea, bronchus and lung—ICD 162

Stomach—ICD 151

Breast—ICD 175, 174

Cervix Uteri—ICD 180

All sites—ICD 140-208

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Cancer Registrations: crude rates per 100,000 resident population, by Area of Residence

	Trachea, Bronchus and Lung		Stomach		Breast		Cervix Uteri	All other Malignancies	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Females	Males	Females
Clwyd									
1979	123·8	32·1	39·3	24·7	[1]2·1	115·5	25·7	314·6	285·8
1980	119·5	31·4	38·1	25·0	[1]1·1	105·1	26·5	309·9	266·6
1981	110·5	34·7	34·9	28·4	[1]1·6	110·6	30·8	355·2	299·4
1982	114·5	43·5	42·2	33·7	[1]1·6	119·7	22·0	351·3	306·3
1983	117·2	40·5	37·8	27·8	[1]2·1	117·1	19·5	371·0	316·1
1984	136·7	44·8	34·6	38·5	[1]2·6	115·4	27·8	385·0	315·0
Dyfed									
1979	96·0	31·0	35·9	36·3	[1]1·2	126·5	23·4	325·7	298·8
1980	128·9	21·5	46·3	18·6	[1]0·0	115·9	27·4	320·2	297·6
1981	113·1	24·4	47·6	29·7	[1]2·5	93·7	21·5	315·2	277·5
1982	104·0	30·3	44·6	26·2	[1]0·6	109·9	21·5	290·4	263·5
1983	132·6	30·0	41·9	31·8	[1]0·6	117·9	27·2	346·5	313·1
1984	118·6	37·6	43·9	28·9	[1]1·2	116·7	29·5	360·1	325·8
Gwent									
1979	126·4	27·1	43·5	24·8	[1]2·8	82·5	15·5	290·9	224·8
1980	124·9	28·8	43·9	21·7	[1]0·9	89·1	18·2	260·4	237·9
1981	136·6	35·4	37·0	24·4	[1]0·5	76·2	18·6	288·4	212·2
1982	126·2	42·2	38·6	27·1	[1]0·9	88·3	15·1	286·3	227·3
1983	113·2	43·1	44·7	27·5	[1]0·5	114·1	18·2	326·7	276·1
1984	123·5	32·9	45·7	22·7	[1]3·3	104·4	22·2	343·9	287·9

	Trachea, Bronchus and Lung		Stomach		Breast		Cervix Uteri	All other Malignancies	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Females	Males	Females
Gwynedd									
1979	115·6	29·2	61·4	42·5	[1]2·7	128·4	25·0	315·3	264·4
1980	140·5	32·4	41·4	30·8	[1]0·9	116·5	20·8	348·6	275·4
1981	132·4	37·4	45·0	34·9	[1]0·0	109·7	[1]14·1	334·2	308·4
1982	132·3	34·0	43·2	40·6	[1]0·9	145·1	23·2	342·0	287·7
1983	149·9	48·1	60·1	38·1	[1]0·9	120·2	26·5	393·2	336·7
1984	127·9	52·1	42·9	42·2	[1]0·0	118·3	26·5	369·4	312·7
Mid Glamorgan									
1979	121·8	28·0	41·4	26·6	[1]1·1	88·0	16·5	251·2	230·2
1980	103·5	32·3	42·1	23·7	[1]1·9	102·3	27·6	267·0	220·3
1981	91·3	34·9	35·0	33·4	[1]1·1	79·1	27·0	255·9	214·0
1982	112·3	38·6	43·2	24·2	[1]0·0	84·1	10·8	282·7	228·1
1983	115·8	38·5	34·1	26·9	[1]1·2	82·4	25·4	292·2	239·1
1984	118·9	44·1	42·0	26·6	[1]1·5	96·0	22·6	316·0	270·3
Powys									
1979	93·8	[1]25·5	38·6	[1]14·5	[1]0·0	100·0	[1]20·0	347·4	236·4
1980	120·9	[1]28·9	[1]34·8	[1]25·3	[1]0·0	90·3	[1]12·6	298·5	296·0
1981	76·4	[1]30·6	40·0	[1]25·2	[1]3·6	117·1	[1]16·2	352·7	261·3
1982	122·0	[1]25·1	43·7	[1]21·5	[1]1·8	86·2	[1]19·7	267·8	280·1
1983	85·3	[1]34·2	[1]32·7	[1]30·6	[1]1·8	113·5	[1]9·0	359·3	300·9
1984	88·4	[1]30·7	41·5	[1]28·9	[1]0·0	84·8	[1]10·8	290·6	185·9
South Glamorgan									
1979	125·7	40·8	42·2	22·4	[1]1·6	78·5	16·9	316·3	245·5
1980	113·8	42·2	31·6	25·8	[1]2·1	89·9	13·4	306·6	261·8
1981	130·2	48·8	37·1	24·4	[1]0·0	94·0	19·9	303·9	253·7
1982	112·5	44·7	43·0	18·9	[1]1·6	97·4	12·9	298·8	252·5
1983	109·9	44·0	36·5	19·3	[1]0·5	94·8	23·7	338·8	276·0
1984	121·5	41·3	40·3	27·5	[1]1·0	87·0	19·7	331·1	254·5
West Glamorgan									
1979	117·1	19·8	39·8	26·6	[1]1·7	96·4	26·6	307·6	271·4
1980	121·7	34·4	42·0	18·8	[1]0·6	104·3	22·4	333·5	285·2
1981	124·4	37·6	43·3	27·1	[1]1·1	100·2	27·7	372·6	290·7
1982	128·3	32·1	42·2	18·4	[1]0·6	115·6	16·3	366·9	293·2
1983	128·9	34·3	49·2	27·9	[1]1·1	112·3	32·2	395·1	344·2
1984	111·4	32·9	38·1	27·0	[1]1·1	116·6	26·0	399·7	346·6

[1] Rate based on less than 20 cases

International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, Code

Site	Code
Trachea, Bronchus and Lung	162
Stomach	151
Breast	174, 175
Cervix Uteri	180

Health Service (Grading)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in each of the Welsh health authorities.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following tables:

East Dyfed—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	572·02	554·53	96·9	17·49	3·1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	13·58	–	–	13·58	100·0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Enrolled Nurse	403·99	–	–	–	–	220·51	54·6	182·48	45·2	1·00	0·2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Enrolled District Trainee	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Senior Enrolled	14·08	–	–	–	–	–	–	4·00	28·4	10·08	71·6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Staff Nurse	421·76	–	–	–	–	–	–	89·48	21·2	309·99	73·5	21·31	5·1	1·00	0·2	–	–	–	–
Staff Midwife	27·57	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	26·57	96·4	1·00	3·6	–	–	–	–	–	–
Deputy Sister	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sister II	222·28	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	107·10	48·2	108·58	48·8	6·60	3·0	–	–
Sister II Midwife	37·00	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1·00	2·7	36·0	97·3	–	–	–	–
District Nurse Sister II	97·91	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2·00	2·0	92·91	94·9	3·00	3·1	–	–
Sister I	23·00	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2·00	8·7	4·00	17·4	13·00	56·5	4·00	17·4
Sister I Midwife	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Health Visitor	53·90	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	46·59	86·9	7·00	13·1	–	–
Senior Nurse 8	15·60	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3·60	23·1	12·00	76·9
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Senior Nurse 7	19·50	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2·00	10·3	17·50	89·7
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	0·50	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0·50	100·0
Clinical Teacher	5·50	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3·00	54·5	2·50	45·5
Fieldwork Teacher	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Practical Work Teacher	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Tutor	12·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·50	100·0
Tutor Midwife	6·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·80	100·0	—	—
Tutor Enrolled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	25·0	3·00	75·0
Totals	1,951·18	554·53	28·4	31·07	1·6	220·51	11·3	275·94	14·1	347·64	17·8	34·41	6·9	289·08	14·8	46·00	2·4	32·00	2·7

Pembrokeshire—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	157·1	148·9	94·8	8·2	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	8·6	—	—	6·6	76·7	2·0	23·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	157·5	—	—	—	—	68·3	43·4	76·0	48·2	13·2	8·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	9·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	9·9	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	142·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	25·9	18·2	113·3	79·7	3·0	2·1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	16·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·4	14·5	14·2	85·5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	8·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	11·5	7·7	88·5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	66·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42·9	64·4	18·7	28·1	5·0	7·5	—	—
Sister II Midwife	22·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22·1	100·0	—	—	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	30·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30·3	100·0	—	—	—	—
Sister I	2·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·0	100·0	—	—	—	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	24·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22·4	91·8	2·00	8·2	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	100·0	—	—
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	10·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·0	100·0	—	—
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0	—	—
Clinical Teacher	2·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·0	100·0	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Practical Work Teacher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tutor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tutor Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tutor Enrolled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0	—	—
Totals	661·0	148·9	22·5	14·8	2·2	70·3	10·6	111·8	16·9	129·9	19·7	67·8	10·3	95·5	14·4	22·0	3·3	—	—

Powys—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	408·32	303·37	74·3	103·62	25·4	1·33	0·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	6·66	—	—	3·26	49·4	2·6	39·4	—	—	0·8	12·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	218·7	—	—	—	—	189·49	86·6	29·21	13·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	21·32	—	—	—	—	—	—	21·32	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	8·28	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·28	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	114·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·35	6·4	88·91	77·7	18·19	15·9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	5·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	20·0	4·00	80·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	35·78	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	87·78	64·6	45·0	33·1	3·0	2·2	—	—
Sister II Midwife	137·78	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26·73	70·8	9·05	23·9	2·0	5·3	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	40·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	36·71	91·0	3·65	9·0	—	—
Sister I	8·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·0	37·5	3·0	37·5	1·0	12·5	1·0	12·5
Sister I Midwife	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	29·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27·77	96·5	1·0	3·5	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Teacher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·0	100·0	—	—
Practical Work Teacher	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·0	100·0	—	—
Tutor	4·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·0	100·0
Tutor Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tutor Enrolled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	8·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·0	100·0	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	1,052·4	303·4	28·8	106·9	10·2	193·4	18·4	66·2	6·3	90·7	8·6	139·7	13·3	122·5	11·6	24·6	2·3	5·0	0·5

Gwynedd—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	499·07	442·70	88·7	56·37	11·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	341·62	—	—	—	—	168·05	49·19	110·85	32·45	62·72	18·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	10·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·2	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Senior Enrolled	3·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	27·78	2·6	72·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	449·88	—	—	—	—	—	—	80·69	17·94	351·85	78·43	16·34	3·63	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	46·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·0	12·85	39·7	85·01	1·0	2·14	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	11·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·0	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	199·67	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	53·87	26·98	139·8	70·01	6·0	3·00	—	—
Sister II Midwife	53·38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·5	4·68	49·88	93·45	1·0	1·87	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	76·76	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	76·76	100·00	—	—	—	—
Sister I	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	66·67	1·0	33·33	—	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	47·06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	47·06	100·00	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	28·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·00	39·29	11·0	39·29	6·0	21·42
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·0	100·00	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	32·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	6·25	30·0	93·75
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	4·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	25·00	3·0	75·00
Clinical Teacher	5·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	100·00	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·0	100·00	—	—
Practical Work Teacher	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·0	100·00	—	—
Tutor	18·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18·0	100·00
Tutor Midwife	2·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·0	100·00
Tutor Enrolled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	28·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·0	42·86	16·0	57·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·0	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	1,877·94	442·7	23·57	56·37	3·00	168·05	8·95	220·74	11·75	473·87	25·23	86·71	4·62	326·5	17·39	44·0	2·34	59·0	3·14

South Glamorgan—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	1,289·45	1,084·9	83·8	204·29	15·8	0·26	0·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	32·88	—	—	31·88	97·0	1·00	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	709·2	—	—	—	—	126·66	17·9	497·81	70·2	84·55	11·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	39·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	39·93	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	110·09	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·73	9·75	98·36	89·3	1·00	0·9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	870·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	205·42	23·6	562·28	64·6	102·44	11·8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	85·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	17·00	19·8	31·89	37·1	37·04	43·1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	20·13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19·13	95·0	1·00	5·0	—	—	—	—
Sister II	503·15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	159·51	31·7	343·64	68·3	—	—	—	—
Sister II Midwife	93·46	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·50	8·02	79·96	85·6	6·00	6·4	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	73·46	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	71·46	97·3	2·00	2·7	—	—
Sister I	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	40·0	3·0	60·0	—	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	96·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	94·50	98·0	2·0	2·0	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	12·5	5·0	62·5	2·0	25·0
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	33·3	2·0	66·6
Senior Nurse 7	62·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·0	8·0	57·0	91·9
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	16·7	5·0	83·3
Clinical Teacher	8·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·0	100·0	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	12·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·0	100·0	—	—
Practical Work Teacher	23·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23·0	100·0	—	—
Tutor	36·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	36·0	100·0
Tutor Midwife	7·53	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·53	100·0
Tutor Enrolled	56·0	—	—	—	—	56·0	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	79·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	66·0	83·5	8·0	10·13	5·0	6·33	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	8·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·0	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	4,237·67	1,084·9	25·8	236·17	5·57	183·92	4·34	836·89	19·74	785·08	18·52	339·62	8·01	593·56	14·00	68·0	1·60	109·53	2·58

Mid-Glamorgan—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	1,325·7	1,089·8	76·2	312·9	23·6	3·0	0·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	25·91	0·5	1·9	23·78	91·77	1·6	6·17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	977·26	—	—	—	—	178·9	18·3	726·9	74·38	70·5	7·2	1·0	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	49·81	—	—	—	—	—	—	45·81	91·97	4·0	8·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	29·27	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·83	23·33	22·44	76·66	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	915·55	—	—	—	—	—	—	171·16	18·69	676·6	73·9	64·5	6·99	3·24	0·35	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	80·77	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·00	12·4	30·14	37·3	40·10	49·6	0·53	0·7	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	30·26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·26	20·68	24·0	79·31	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	532·19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	0·18	204·93	38·5	314·43	59·08	11·83	2·22	—	—
Sister II Midwife	162·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·28	4·47	147·44	90·6	8·0	4·91	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	121·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	119·59	98·53	1·8	1·48	—	—
Sister I	5·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	20·00	4·0	80·00	—	—	—	—
Sister I Midwife	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0	—	—
Health Visitor	103·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	96·76	93·6	6·6	6·38	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	84·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16·0	19·04	38·0	45·2	30·0	35·7
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	8·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·0	75·0	2·0	25·0
Senior Nurse 7	28·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	3·57	27·0	96·4
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	5·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·0	100·0
Clinical Teacher	10·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·5	100·0	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	17·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17·0	100·0	—	—

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Practical Work Teacher	29·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29·0	100·0	—	—
Tutor	41·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	41·5	100·0
Tutor Midwife	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	33·30	2·0	66·6
Tutor Enrolled	27·0	—	—	—	—	27·0	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	79·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	65·0	82·27	9·0	11·39	5·0	6·32	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	4·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	25·0	2·0	50·0	1·0	25·0	—	—
Others	18·9	0·9	4·76	4·48	23·7	—	—	—	—	2·4	12·69	1·0	5·29	5·0	26·45	3·0	15·8	2·0	10·5
Totals	4,715·16	1,011·2	21·44	341·16	7·23	210·48	4·48	1,025·7	21·76	822·36	17·44	349·81	7·41	708·99	15·03	135·7	2·88	109·5	2·33

West Glamorgan—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	593·03	518·86	87·5	74·17	12·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	12·75	—	—	11·75	92·2	1·0	7·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	632·87	—	—	—	—	229·54	36·3	293·61	46·4	109·52	17·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	35·49	—	—	—	—	—	—	34·49	97·2	1·0	2·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	11·1	8·0	88·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	826·15	—	—	—	—	—	—	128·05	15·5	591·90	71·6	103·14	12·5	3·0	0·4	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	111·07	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	5·4	45·69	41·1	59·38	53·5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	358·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	93·71	26·1	245·09	68·3	20·0	5·6	—	—
Sister II Midwife	94·24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	94·24	100·0	—	—	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	78·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	77·90	98·7	1·0	1·3	—	—
Sister I	11·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9·0	81·8	2·0	18·2
Sister I Midwife	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	77·53	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	71·03	91·6	6·5	8·4	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	25·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·00	32·0	17·0	68·0
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	25·0	3·00	75·0
Senior Nurse 7	20·98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20·98	100·0
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	100·0
Clinical Teacher	7·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·00	100·0	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	10·0	9·00	90·0	—	—
Practical Work Teacher	11·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·00	100·0	—	—
Tutor	22·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22·72	100·0	—	—
Tutor Midwife	2·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·60	100·0
Tutor Enrolled	12·00	—	—	—	—	6·0	50·0	4·0	33·3	2·0	16·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	33·51	—	—	—	—	—	—	26·44	78·9	6·07	18·1	1·0	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	33·0	2·0	66·7	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	2,996·44	518·86	17·3	85·92	2·9	236·54	7·9	493·59	16·5	764·24	25·6	259·23	8·6	495·26	16·5	72·50	2·4	70·30	2·3

Gwent—November 1988

Title	WTC Staff	A	Per cent.	B	Per cent.	C	Per cent.	D	Per cent.	E	Per cent.	F	Per cent.	G	Per cent.	H	Per cent.	I	Per cent.
Nursing Auxiliary	1,205·84	1,148·67	95·26	57·17	4·74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	24·78	—	—	24·78	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	979·97	—	—	—	—	174·60	17·81	598·00	60·09	206·07	21·00	1·30	0·01	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	55·48	—	—	—	—	—	—	53·48	96·40	2·00	3·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	41·60	—	—	—	—	0·53	1·27	9·44	22·69	31·63	76·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	730·94	—	—	—	—	—	—	101·31	13·69	554·86	74·99	82·77	11·9	1·00	0·14	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	62·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·00	16·12	6·71	10·82	40·72	65·65	4·60	7·42	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	39·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	39·72	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	416·86	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9·76	0·18	115·65	27·74	282·45	70·16	8·00	1·92	—	—
Sister II Midwife	113·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·64	4·98	98·72	67·09	9·00	7·94	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	112·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	112·03	100·00	—	—	—	—
Sister I	12·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·93	53·60	3·00	23·20	3·00	23·20
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	97·04	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	97·04	100·00	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	47·64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	4·20	15·00	31·49	30·64	64·32
Senior Nurse 7	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	100·00
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	44·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·00	15·91	37·00	84·09
Clinical Teacher	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	20.00	4·00	80·00
Fieldwork Teacher	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	100·00	—	—
Practical Work Teacher	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16·00	100·00	—	—
Tutor	15·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15·00	100·00	—	—
Tutor Midwife	42·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	9·52	5·00	11·90	33·00	78·57
Tutor Enrolled	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	25·00	—	—	3·00	75·00
Post Staff Nurse	49·00	—	—	—	—	6·00	12·24	43·00	87·76	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	100·00	—	—
Totals	4,133·22	1,148·67	27·78	81·95	1·98	181·13	4·38	815·23	19·72	802·03	19·4	285·80	6·91	619·77	14·99	83·00	2·00	115·64	2·79

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Title	*WTC Staff*	*A*	*Per cent.*	*B*	*Per cent.*	*C*	*Per cent.*	*D*	*Per cent.*	*E*	*Per cent.*	*F*	*Per cent.*	*G*	*Per cent.*	*H*	*Per cent.*	*I*	*Per cent.*
Nursing Auxiliary	839·16	760·4	90·5	72·17	8·6	5·0	0·6	1·64	0·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	8·72	—	—	7·72	88·5	1·0	11·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	643·46	—	—	—	—	169·74	26·4	429·61	66·8	40·11	6·2	2·0	0·3	2·0	0·3	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	42·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42·0	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	37·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	37·0	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	608·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·06	16·45	399·93	65·8	104·21	17·1	3·0	0·5	1·0	0·16	—	—
Staff Midwife	84·97	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	7·1	15·99	18·8	62·72	73·8	0·26	0·3	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	33·06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	33·06	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	327·29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·53	0·16	85·76	26·2	231·0	70·6	8·0	2·4	2·0	0·6
Sister II Midwife	85·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·13	9·56	68·90	81·0	8·0	9·4	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	91·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·36	5·85	73·24	80·0	13·0	14·2	—	—
Sister I	13·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·0	46·2	7·0	53·8	—	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	73·75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	71·75	97·3	2·0	2·7	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	27·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·0	7·4	20·0	74·0	5·0	18·5
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·0	33·3	4·0	66·6
Senior Nurse 7	58·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·0	13·8	50·0	86·2
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·0	100·0
Clinical Teacher	14·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·0	50·0	7·0	50·0
Fieldwork Teacher	8·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·0	87·5	1·0	12·5
Practical Work Teacher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tutor	16·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16·0	100·0
Tutor Midwife	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	100·0
Tutor Enrolled	11·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·8	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Staff Nurse	18·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·0	22·2	14·0	77·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Students Sister II	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	111·13	8·75	7·88	—	—	13·96	12·6	30·33	27·3	22·99	20·69	15·4	13·85	1·0 12·68	100·0 11·4	4·0	3·6	3·0	2·7
Totals	3,162·17	769·15	24·32	79·84	2·52	199·72	5·99	583·44	18·45	572·55	18·10	316·64	10·1	471·83	14·92	87·0	2·75	92·0	2·90

Rates

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an estimate of the respective number of farmworkers and other employees in tied housing who at present have their rates paid by their employer.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available.

Water Authority (Borrowing)

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much, in cash terms, the water authority in Wales borrowed, per year, from 1983 to the latest available date broken down by year.

Mr. Grist: This information is contained in each of the annual report and accounts of the Welsh water authority for the last four years, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Oil Spillage (Milford Haven)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effects of the oil spillage in the Milford Haven on 3 December on the ecology and environment of the Haven, and the action being taken to mitigate the consequences of this accident.

Mr. Grist: Oil from the spillage has affected about eight miles of coastline on both sides of the Haven and at least 300 birds. It has also affected the fishing industry including fish farms in the Haven, one salmon unit in particular having been heavily contaminated.

The Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit is satisfied that the harbour authority, Texaco and the local authorities are working together effectively to deal with the situation. The district inspector of fisheries has also been keeping a close watch on the effect on fisheries.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Nature Conservancy Council are dealing with the effect on the birds. In particular, affected swans have been sent to appropriate centres for treatment.

Welsh Language

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on the recommendation of the national curriculum Welsh working group that any exemption granted by him to schools not to teach Welsh as a foundation subject should be temporary until such time as the schools can put into place the necessary programme of study and recruit the required staff.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh working group is currently consulting on the preliminary recommendations set out in its interim report in order to inform its final report. Before my right hon. Friend reaches any decisions about the use of his power to make exemptions from foundation subjects in the national curriculum he will want to consider this final report due in April 1989. He expects the group to make recommendations which are as widely acceptable as possible, so as to minimise the need for exemption but he would not at this stage want to rule out the possibility of exemptions in circumstances other than those by the working group in its interim report.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give information on the level of poll tax for spending at grant-related expenditure levels in all areas of Wales *(a)* with safety nets and *(b)* full implementation; and if he will show the difference between these figures and comparable figures for poll tax payers in Worcester and Wychavon.

Mr. Grist: Illustrative figures for Welsh local authorities based on 1988-89 grant levels, non-domestic rates and grant-related expenditure are given in the following table:

Charging authority	Community charge for spending at grant related expenditure levels £ (a) with safety net	(b) full implementation
Alyn and Deeside	167	133
Colwyn	181	133
Delyn	158	133
Glyndwr	137	133
Rhuddlan	164	133
Wrexham	141	133
Carmarthen	103	133
Ceredigion	127	133
Dinefwr	106	133
Llanelli	109	133
Preseli Pembrokeshire	122	133
South Pembrokeshire	144	133
Blaenau Gwent	91	133
Islwyn	104	133
Monmouth	154	133
Newport	166	133
Torfaen	134	133
Aberconwy	168	133
Arfon	125	133
Dwyfor	156	133
Meirionydd	149	133
Ynys Mon	155	133
Cynon Valley	83	133
Merthyr Tydfil	87	133
Ogwr	118	133
Rhondda	60	133
Rhymney Valley	99	133
Taff Ely	113	133
Brecknock	129	133
Montgomeryshire	142	133
Radnor	143	133
Cardiff	201	133
Vale of Glamorgan	177	133
Port Talbot	81	133
Lliw Valley	88	133
Neth	102	133
Swansea	124	133

The community charge calculations use present needs assessments which are under review. Transitional safety net adjustments are illustrative and based on budgeted expenditure for 1988-89.

Grant-related expenditure figures for Welsh local authorities are calculated on a different basis from those for English authorities, so the figures quoted are not directed comparable with the Welsh figures.

The illustrative community charge for 1988-89 for spending at the level of grant-related expenditure in England would be £202. With the illustrative safety net adjustment as published on 23 June, the figures for Worcester and Wychavon would increase by £60 and £75 respectively.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will calculate for relevant Welsh authorities the grant and non-domestic rate income they will receive in the same manner as the information referred to in the answers to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside, *Official Report*, column *63*, on 25 November.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Local Administration Communications

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the functions carried out under the heading local administration communications, and so on in the United Kingdom, in Table 2.3 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Table 2.3 of volume 2 of the statement attributes expenditure between the main elements of the defence programme. Some support expenditure cannot readily be attributed in this way and is included under the general heading of "local administration, communications etc. in the United Kingdom". It includes miscellaneous expenditure such as travel, freight and telecommunications costs for all three services; support costs of outstations, and of HQs other than Whitehall; recruiting centres; and payments to HMSO.

Low Flying

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent recent calls for a curb on low flying in western Germany will not lead to an increase in the number of low-level flights over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom, along with other NATO Allies, has undertaken, as a mark of respect to those dead and bereaved in the tragic accident on 8 December, to suspend flying training activities in the FRG until 2 January 1989. Any training activity considered essential will therefore be carried out elsewhere, primarily in the United Kingdom. However, normal United Kingdom activity will be additionally constrained to ensure that during this period, until 2 January, there is no overall increase in activity in the United Kingdom as a result.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the possibility of relocating low-level flight exercises to more sparsely populated areas, including the northern regions of Canada.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are very much aware of the need to ensure that as little disturbance as possible is caused by low-flying military aircraft. Nonetheless, low-flying training is essential to prepare strike attack and offensive support aircraft for their wartime roles, in which credibility is vital for deterrence. Valuable training opportunities, such as participation in major exercises in the United States and Canada, and use of the joint facility at Goose bay in Canada, are greatly welcomed, but are no substitute for training in the United Kingdom and Europe, where aircraft are based and would operate in wartime.

Porton International

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's contract with Porton International plc.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no record of any HQ contracts having been placed with a company with this name. No central record is maintained of orders placed locally, and an investigation could be carried out only at disproportionate cost.

Tanks

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 29 November, *Official Report*, column 566, what rate of *(a)* fuel consumption, *(b)* road speed, *(c)* cross country speed, *(d)* period of time between automative failure, *(e)* rate of fire, *(f)* speed of target engagement, *(g)* rate of accuracy of initial shots, *(h)* total weight and *(i)* in-service date will be required of the tank that wins the competition currently being held to determine a replacement for the Chieftain tank.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* Information in the precise detail requested by the hon. Member is classified. I can assure him that all relevant factors are being taken into account.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Iraq concerning violation of human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have repeatedly expressed our concern to the Iraqi authorities over failures to respect human rights, particularly in relation to their Kurdish community.

WEU

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last attended a meeting of the Western European Union assembly.

Mr. Waldegrave: As President-in-Office of the WEU Ministerial Council my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State attended the WEU Assembly on 7 December. A copy of his speech is being placed in the Library.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees are estimated to be resident in transit camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: On 9 December there were 25,308 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. Of these 15,231 have refugee status.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Governor of Hong Kong on the plight of the Vietnamese refugees.

Mr. Eggar: We are in close and frequent contact with the Government of Hong Kong on all aspects of the problem of Vietnamese boat people.

Arms Control

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet his counterpart in the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss the implications for arms control negotiations of modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet Herr Genscher in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council and on 19 and 20 December but there are no plans for a formal discussion then on the modernisation of NATO's short-range nuclear weapons. He also expects to have a bilateral meeting with Herr Genscher early in the new year; no agenda has yet been agreed but the discussion is likely to include current topics of interest to members of the NATO Alliance.

Anglo-Japanese Relations

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the state of Anglo-Japanese relations.

Mr. Eggar: Anglo-Japanese relations are excellent. 1988 has seen a significant increase in co-operation in many fields. We have made progress on a number of trade-related issues, including the long-standing dispute over whisky tax. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State hopes to have a further round of talks with the Japanese Foreign Minister in the new year.

Global Environment

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has plans to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations to discuss action against threats to the global environment.

Mr. Eggar: No. As I told the hon. Member on 30 November at column *318*, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has primary responsibility for international action for environmental issues. In close consultation with his Department, we have been working to ensure that our concerns about global environment problems are firmly registered in the appropriate bodies within the UN system.

Chemical Warfare Stocks (Soviet Union)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what clarification has been received from the Soviet Union about its statement that its chemical warfare stockpile does not exceed 50,000 tons.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Soviet Government first stated in December 1987 that their chemical weapon stocks did not exceed 50,000 tons "in terms of toxic agent". This is substantially lower than western estimates. We have pressed the Soviet authorities for further information, particularly during the recent exchange of visits between the United Kingdom chemical defence establishment, Porton Down and the Soviet military chemical facility at Shikhany. No further clarification has been forthcoming.

Conventional Forces (Inspection)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on changes in Soviet policy in the last nine months on short-notice challenge on-site inspection of conventional forces.

Mr. Waldegrave: On several occasions this year Soviet spokesmen have stressed the importance of adequate verification arrangements including on-site challenge inspection, to accompany agreed reductions in conventional forces. These points echo what the Alliance has been

saying for years. The Soviet Union has also availed itself of the on-site inspection provisions of the Stockholm document three times during the last nine months and has itself been inspected on three occasions, once by the United Kingdom in April.

Test Ban

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes in United Kingdom policy on a comprehensive test ban occurred between the publication of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" and the publication of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988."

Mr. Waldegrave: The sections of the 1987 and 1988 statements on the Defence Estimates dealing with a comprehensive test ban represent the same policy expressed in different terms. Both express support for a step-by-step approach; both recognise that a comprehensive test ban is a long-term goal; and both note that important verification difficulties remain to be resolved. We also recognise that the security of the United Kingdom will depend for the foreseeable future on deterrence based, in part, on the possession of nuclear weapons. That means a continuing requirement to conduct underground nuclear tests to ensure that our nuclear weapons remain effective and up to date.

United Kingdom Nationals (EC)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many United Kingdom nationals are employed by the European Economic Community Commission in Brussels; and if he will initiate inquiries into the number of such persons in the administrative and manual grades who retire before normal retirement age on grounds of invalidity;

(2) if he will raise at the Council of Ministers the circumstances under which persons leaving the European Economic Community's employment can be classified as invalids for pension purposes; how many administrative and manual grade leavers have been so classified over each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There are around 1,000 United Kingdom nationals employed in the EC Commission in Brussels. We have long pressed the Commission to put forward proposals to rectify the situation concerning invalidity pensions and will continue to do so.

South Africa (Military Service)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African authorities about the case of Mr. Charles Bester, an 18-year-old Anglican, sentenced last week to six years in jail following his conscientious objection to joining the South African armed forces.

Mrs. Chalker: We understand why some young South Africans choose to refuse to do military service, and respect the sincerity of their views. Such decisions are a matter for the individuals concerned. We have no locus to intervene.

Falklands Islands (Geneva Meeting)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects were discussed at the meeting in Geneva between Sir Crispin Tickell and Sr. Dante Caputo; what was the outcome of the discussions; what was the basis and outcome of the discussions on the Falklands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Our permanent representative at the United Nations was asked to call by Dr. Caputo in his capacity as President of the United Nations General Assembly. They covered a range of United Nations business. The opportunity was naturally taken to discuss issues of common concern.

Persian Gulf (Royal Naval Presence)

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the progressive reduction of the British naval presence in the Gulf following the ending of hostilities between Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear since the ceasefire came into effect, Royal Navy ships will remain in international waters in the Gulf so long as we judge that there is a job to be done in upholding freedom of navigation there.

Khmer Rouge

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if an entry visa has been granted within the last 12 months to any official of the Khmer Rouge or his or her family.

Mr. Eggar: No such visas have been granted.

Madame Ieng Thirith

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what application for a visa has been received within the last three years from Madame Ieng Thirith or any members of her family; and what action was taken.

Mr. Eggar: There is no record of any application for a visa from Madame Ieng Thirith or any members of her family.

Official Secrets

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) of 13 December, *Official Report*, column 490, he will publish a list of the international organisations which provided information classified as confidential in the past 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if confidential information, documents or other articles as referred to in clause 3(1)(b) of the Official Secrets Bill is obtained by the Government from any organ of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Eggar: We receive a number of papers, such as working documents to be considered by the Council of

Ministers, or reports from the Commission on international negotiations being conducted by the Commission on behalf of the EC under a mandate from the Council, which might fall into this category.

SCOTLAND

Mountain Rescue

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the insurance premiums which would be necessary to ensure that all mountain rescue teams, affiliated to the mountain rescue committee of Scotland, have the same cover for the death or injury of team members during rescue operations as those which pertain in the northern constabulary area;

(2) whether his Department issues any guidance on what particular levels of insurance benefit should be afforded to members of mountain rescue teams; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on insurance premiums for mountain rescue teams is not held centrally, nor is any central guidance issued on the levels of insurance benefit afforded to members of mountain rescue teams. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member on 15 November at column *585*, it is for each police authority to determine the level of insurance cover to be provided for mountain rescue teams, in the light of recommendations made on this matter by the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland).

Farming

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from farmers concerning their financial position following three poor harvests and higher interest rate charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend keeps in close touch with the leaders of the industry and is therefore well aware of farmers' views on these matters. The financial position of agriculture which is affected by a wide range of factors is kept under regular review and is taken into account in the formulation of policy.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he intends to take in rural areas to enable farm workers to find alternative sources of income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have been instrumental in introducing a range of schemes—including the set-aside scheme for arable land, the farm woodland scheme and the farm diversification grant scheme—to assist those engaged in farming to adjust to the reform of the common agricultural policy.

We also already provide substantial assistance through various programmes and agencies—such as the SDA and HIDB—aimed at improving employment opportunities in rural areas.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the profit figures for arable farms in a representative sample from European countries on the following basis *(a)* up to 80 acres, *(b)* 80 to 120 acres, *(c)* 120 to 200 acres, *(d)* 200 to 270 acres, *(e)* 270 to 300 acres and *(f)* over 300 acres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the level of real interest rates being paid on farm borrowings todate in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Holland, *(c)* France, *(d)* Germany, *(e)* Spain and *(f)* Italy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is contained in table 3.3.10 on page T/80 of the 1987 report on the agricultural situation in the Community published by the Commission of the European Communities: a copy is in the Library.

Set-aside

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has received on the effects of the set-aside scheme on employment in *(a)* farming and *(b)* agricultural suppliers;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effects on rural unemployment in each region of successful set-aside scheme applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 15 December, at column *672*.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of hectares registered for set-aside which will be *(a)* kept under natural grasses, *(b)* put to woodland and *(c)* used for non-agricultural purposes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under the set-aside scheme, applicants may opt to use set-aside land as fallow (with a green cover crop), for woodland (either under the farm woodland scheme or the woodland grant scheme) or for non-agricultural use. The following details of proposals by 1988 applicants are provisional, pending checking of all applications:

	Hectares
Permanent fallow	13,618
Rotational fallow	1,726
Woodland	460
Non-agricultural use	379
Total	16,183

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the number of farmers in each region who have registered under the set-aside scheme, *(b)* how many hectares are involved in each region and *(c)* the total expressed as a percentage of available arable land.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows. Hectarage details are provisional, pending checking of all registrations submitted. Regions are grouped in relation to the area organisation of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, since information is not available by local authority area.

Regions	Registrations	Area of eligible land hectares	Total holding area hectares
Highland (except Skye), Orkney, Shetland	376	23,155	97,202
Highland (Skye only), Western Isles, Strathclyde (Argyll only)	13	237	9,031
Central Strathclyde (except Argyll), Dumfries and Galloway	743	29,939	125,886
Borders, Lothian, Fife (West)	850	95,182	198,381
Tayside, Fife (North East)	1,412	118,493	291,945
Grampian	2,517	133,408	339,930
Total	5,911	400,414	1,062,375

The provisional total area of eligible land registered represents about 69 per cent. of all land used for the production of relevant arable crops in Scotland in 1988 (about 583,000 hectares). It should be noted that registration does not imply a commitment or intention to apply for set-aside at some future date. It simply reflects the response to widespread encouragement by the Department, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland and others to all farmers to lodge details of their 1988 cropping pattern this year while they could still be verified by the Department. This saves a farmer who might opt to join the scheme at a later date having to provide independently corroborated evidence of the 1988 pattern.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the number of set-aside scheme applications received to date, *(b)* the number of farms affected in each region expressed as a percentage of the total and, *(c)* the number of hectares in each region affected, expressed as a percentage of the total.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers in Scotland have applied for the set-aside scheme; how many hectares of land are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows.

Regions	Applications		Area proposed for set-aside	
	Numbers	Percentage of total	Hectares	Percentage of total
Highland (except Skye), Orkney, Shetland	38	8·4	1,524	9·4
Highland (Skye only), Western Isles, Strathclyde (Argyll only)	—	—	—	—
Central Strathclyde (except Argyll), Dumfries and Galloway	41	9·1	1,642	10·1
Borders, Lothian, Fife (West)	37	8·2	1,937	12·0
Tayside, Fife (North East)	79	17·6	2,267	14·0
Grampian	255	56·7	8,813	54·5
Total	450	100·0	16,183	100·0

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the reason for the decision to delay the payment of the suckler cow premiums; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Payments to 3,600 applicants amounting to almost £5 million are being issued today. We expect to make a further 2,000 payments valued at over £3 million later this week.

This year the closing date for receipt of applications was put back from 30 November to 31 January. Applications are still being received by the Department and will continue to be processed as quickly as possible.

Diseased Salmon

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the dumping of diseased salmon in the Highlands and Islands area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is aware of current concern about possible environmental damage from dumping of diseased salmon.

Fishermen and fish farmers are responsible for the safe and environmentally appropriate disposal of any dead fish in consultation, as necessary, with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, river purification board or waste disposal authority.

Dead fish from fish farms or areas which have been the subject of an order made under section 2 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1937, in respect of a notifiable disease, must be disposed of within 48 hours by incineration or, if this is not possible, buried with quicklime. The current guidance of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, in its code of practice for notifiable diseases, is kept under review, in consultation with the industry and other interests, in the light of experience to date.

Government Cars

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cars in the Government pool in Scotland, including Ministers' cars, are capable of taking unleaded petrol; and how many of them still take only leaded petrol.

Mr. Rifkind: Of the 220 vehicles owned by the Scottish Office, including cars for ministerial use, 33 are capable of taking unleaded petrol without any engine adjustments; a further 155 are in the process of being converted to run on unleaded petrol and 32 can still take only leaded petrol, although they will eventually be phased out of service.

Cars provided for Ministers and others by the Government car service in Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

SDA (Property)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the total expenditure on development of the Scottish Development Agency property sites since its establishment, *(b)* what was the annual income claimed from those sites and *(c)* what is the current total value of these sites; and if he will make a statement outlining the future plans for these sites with regard to ownership and management post-reorganisation of the Scottish Development Agency functions.

Mr. Lang: Total expenditure on the development of the Scottish Development Agency's property sites since its establishment in 1975 is £462 million. Annual income in 1987-88 from the agency's property operation was £18·8 million. This figure excludes income from the sale of assets. The total value of the agency's property portfolio in 1987-88 was £158·685 million. The expenditure, income and value figures set out above do not relate to a constant set of physical assets, as the agency acquires and disposes of property in line with its statutory functions.

The agency is currently discussing with my Department proposals for the disposal of a significant proportion of its assets but no decisions have yet been made. The Government's White Paper "Scottish Enterprise" contains proposals for the exercise of the agency's property functions once Scottish Enterprise is set up. Consultations on the proposals are still under way.

Mining Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the operation and success of the Monklands teenage refuge programme in Airdrie; and whether he has plans to expand this service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Monklands teenage refuge is part of the services developed by Strathclyde social work department to meet the special needs of young people in crisis. I understand that the department has monitored its operation and concluded that it meets successfully its aim to provide emergency short-stay accommodation for the older teenager. It is for social work authorities to assess the level and type of service or facilities for young people appropriate for their areas.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies have been carried out by his Department about the vulnerability of industrial companies based in Scotland to competition from other industries based in the south of England once the Channel tunnel comes into operation.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State has had meetings with the chairman of the British Rail Board on how to ensure that Scotland benefits fully from the Channel tunnel. British Rail are taking the views of a range of interested parties in Scotland including the CBI, STUC and relevant public sector organisations. The Scottish Development Agency has commissioned a report from consultants to consider the likely impact of the Channel tunnel on Scotland and ways in which the potential benefits can be maximised.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that Scottish industry is served by fast and efficient rail services between Scotland and the Channel tunnel when it becomes operational; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has had meetings with the chairman of the British Rail Board on how to ensure that Scotland benefits fully from the Channel tunnel. The Scottish Development Agency has commissioned a report from consultants to consider the likely impact of the Channel tunnel on Scotland and ways in which the potential benefits can be maximised.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Scottish industrialists, trade unions and local authorities regarding the need to ensure that Scotland has reliable railway connections with the continent once the Channel tunnel comes into operation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act requires British Rail to publish a plan by the end of 1989 setting out its proposals for international rail services through the tunnel. British Rail is consulting widely with interested parties in the regions over the preparation of this plan. In addition to this, in June this year, the Scottish Office organised jointly with ScotRail and the Confederation of British Industry a very successful conference on the opportunities which the tunnel could offer Scotland. A wide range of interested parties attended this conference and took part in the open forum including my hon. Friend the Minister for industry in Scotland.

NHS Grading

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of appeals lodged at the last available date by nursing and midwifery staff in each regional health board area, against their new regrading; and if he will show for each health board area, the percentage of appeals lodged per grade.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally. The number of formal appeals which will fall to be dealt with by health boards will not be known until initial reviews have been carried out of those cases where staff have notified an intention to appeal.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for the Lothian health region *(a)* the number of nurses and midwives assigned to each of the new grades, *(b)* the number of appeals lodged, *(c)* the estimated cost of meeting the initial regrading allocations and *(d)* the total allocation from central funds assigned to cover the cost of the new grading awards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of nurses on the new clinical grades in Lothian health board are as follows:

Grade	Number
A	2,239
B	214
C	446
D	1,502
E	1,892
F	311
G	1,170
H	220
I	158

Figures reflect the assimilation of posts based on duties and responsibilities as at 1 April 1988 and are correct as at 31 October 1988.

Information on appeals is not held centrally. The number of formal appeals to be heard by health boards will not be known until initial reviews have been completed of cases where staff have indicated they may wish to appeal.

Separate health board estimates of the costs of implementing this year's nurses' pay award were not made. Supplementary allocations were based on national estimates and distributed to health boards in Scotland using the SHARE formula. Boards have been given an additional £93·433 million over and above their initial allocation for 1988-89 to allow them to meet the cost of the pay awards to nurses and other staff covered by the review bodies. Lothian health board's additional allocation amounts to £14·936 million.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated into each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comprehensive details of the numbers of staff assimilated into each of the grades are as follows:

Previous grade	Staff in post[1]	Percentages transferred to each new clinical grade								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	3,906·63	95·5	4·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	94·11	—	90·4	9·6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	1,870·85	—	0·1	46·6	53·2	0·1	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse	74·39	—	—	1·3	98·7	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse	144·83	—	—	1·4	96·5	2·1	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	2,625·02	—	—	—	31·7	67·6	0·7	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	340·31	—	—	—	0·9	88·1	11·0	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	71·05	—		—	—	86·4	13·6	—	—	—
Sister II	1,449·10	—	—	—	—	—	71·7	26·8	1·5	—
Sister II (Midwife)	179·67	—	—	—	—	—	59·9	39·5	0·6	—
District Nurse Sister II	411·40	—	—	—	—	—	5·5	93·9	0·6	—
Sister I	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	16·7	83·3	—
Sister I (Midwife)	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Health Visitor	288·92	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	185·06	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·1	83·0	8·9
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	32·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·3	87·5	6·2
Senior Nurse 7	47·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·1	89·4	8·5
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	62·5	37·5
Clinical Teacher	73·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Fieldwork Teacher	36·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Practical Work Teacher	35·97	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Tutor	104·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Tutor Midwife	18·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled Nurse	244.00	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	194·00	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	12,443·97	30·0	2·1	9·1	18·0	17·2	9·9	9·3	3·2	1·2

[1] Whole-time equivalents.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated into each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Tayside health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comprehensive details of the numbers of staff assimilated to the new grades are given in the table.

Previous Grade	Staff in Post[1]	Percentages transferred to each new clinical grade								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	1,579·40	97·2	2·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff NNEB	22·50	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	1,018·16	—	—	61·3	38·7	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse	8·00	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse	53·13	—	—	—	36·4	63·6	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	1,106·43	—	—	—	10·9	85·8	3·3	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	143·88	—	—	—	—	71·3	28·0	0·7	—	—
Deputy Sister	3·13	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—
Sister II	544·65	—	—	—	—	—	45·2	53·9	0·9	—
Sister II Midwife	43·80	—	—	—	—	—	13·7	86·3	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	105·20	—	—	—	—	—	2·4	96·6	1·0	—
Sister I	8·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	15·4	84·6	—
Sister I Midwife	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Health Visitor	106·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	98·1	1·9	—
Senior Nurse 8	73·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	94·5	5·5
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Senior Nurse 7	27·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	50·0	50·0
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Teacher	35·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Fieldwork Teacher	13·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Practical Work Teacher	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Tutor	28·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Tutor Midwife	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled Nurse	62·00	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	55·00	—	—	—	78·2	20·0	1·8	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	0·80	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—
Sister II	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	50·0	50·0	—	—
Others	4·00	—	—	—	—	50·0	25·0	—	25·0	—
Totals	5,074·63	30·2	1·3	13·5	11·5	21·7	6·8	10·7	3·2	1·1

[1] Whole-time equivalents

Forestry

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Moray of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *116*, if he will list *(a)* the names of the organisations and individuals who wrote to him about forestry policy, *(b)* which aspects of present support arrangements were drawn to the Government's attention, *(c)* whether or not the organisations involved considered that the Government's annual planting target of 33,000 new hectares would be met in future years, *(d)* what proposals they urged the Government to adopt with regard to forestry policy and *(e)* what opinions they expressed concerning the Government's commitment to the continuing expansion of forestry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most of the correspondents wrote in confidence to my right hon. and learned Friend. It would, therefore, be inappropriate to name them or to reveal the contents of their letters.

Fish Farming

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has now completed his review of the consultative procedures operated by the Crown Estate Commissioners prior to the granting of a seabed lease for marine fish farming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have now completed my review of the Crown Estate Commissioners' consultative procedures for the granting of seabed leases and I am able to announce my conclusions. Discussions have taken place with a range of bodies, statutory and non-statutory, with interests in conservation and in the development of the fish farming industry. We received a number of written representations, and a number of bodies also produced reports on various aspects of the fish farming industry during the period of our review. Among those who submitted views were Highland regional council, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Nature Conservancy Council, the fish farming committee of the National Farmers Union of Scotland and Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link.

There was general agreement that the extensive consultation arrangements introduced by the commissioners two years ago were working well, and enabled all those with an interest in a lease application to make their views known. Some bodies argued that existing procedures gave insufficient opportunity for contentious cases to be discussed, and criticised the lack of an overall strategy for the development of the industry, against which individual lease applications could be assessed. The local authorities contended that marine fish farming should be brought into the planning system, so that decisions could be reached more openly by elected bodies and be subject to the existing appeal arrangements. Although some concern was expressed about the risks to the marine environment of intensive fish farm development, there was little criticism of the handling of particular applications by the

commissioners and a general recognition that the industry had brought immense benefits to many areas where alternative employment opportunities are scarce.

The Government have reviewed carefully the case for the extension of planning control, as we did some years ago following the report of the Montgomery committee. Having studied the evidence, we have concluded that a convincing case has not been made for an extension. We are satisfied that the commissioners have handled efficiently the rapid increase in the number of lease applications and have taken proper account of the relevant factors in reaching their decisions. Last year they produced guidelines for the siting and design of fish farms, and have been working on an expanded version of this document. A draft of this will shortly be the subject of consultations with interested parties. They have supplemented the resources they devote to the monitoring of existing developments. The introduction of planning control would require primary legislation, and raise difficult issues concerning the range of other offshore development to be covered by planning control. In addition, a successful applicant for planning consent for a fish farm could still be refused a lease by the commissioners as owners of the seabed in territorial waters.

We accept, however, that steps should be taken to enable contentious cases to be discussed more fully and to introduce an independent element into the decision-making process on such cases. I have therefore agreed with the commissioners that they will establish an advisory committee, to consider lease applications referred to it. The chairman and deputy chairman of the advisory committee will be appointed by me and the following statutory bodies will be invited to participate as members of the committee: the relevant district or general planning authority, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Highlands and Islands development board, the relevant river purification authority and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. The committee will meet as frequently as is necessary to consider expeditiously cases referred to it.

Cases will be referred to the advisory committee where the decision which the commissioners propose to reach on a lease application encounters objections from one or more of the statutory bodies represented on the committee which cannot otherwise be resolved. The commissioners may also choose to put to the committee cases in other circumstances where they consider that they would find the advice of the committee of assistance. Applications for less than 3,000 sq m in cage area or in sea area for shellfish leases will not normally be put before the committee, unless they are for areas regarded as very sensitive. These very sensitive areas were first identified in the guidelines published last year and are being expanded in the current revision of the guidelines. The chairman of the committee will report to the commissioners the outcome of the committee's discussions and will make a recommendation as to whether a lease should be granted. The commissioners will take full account of that recommendation in making their decision on the lease.

Should the committee decide that any case raises particularly difficult or wide-ranging issues it will be open to the chairman to advise the commissioners to refer the case to me for my advice before a decision is taken. The commissioners have undertaken that where such a recommendation is made they will refer the case to me and take particular account of my advice in reaching their decision.

The commissioners will issue further guidance about the operation of the advisory committee in due course. The new procedures will come into effect as soon as the committee has been established, and I hope to announce the appointments of the chairman and deputy chairman as soon as possible.

During our consultations a number of representations were made suggesting that insufficient information was available about existing fish farm leases from the commissioners. Several bodies also complained that detailed reasoning was not given for decisions made on leases. The commissioners have assured me that full information is being made widely available about the numbers and locations of leases granted and that they will expand the reasoning for decisions in controversial cases.

I believe the new procedures I have outlined will enable the fish farming industry to look forward confidently to the future and will reassure those bodies who have expressed concern about the development of the industry that the environmental aspects of new developments will continue to be considered with particular care. The Crown Estate Commissioners have responded well to the needs of a rapidly growing industry. The new advisory committee procedures are designed to assist them in that task by facilitating discussion of difficult cases and by enabling me to advise on particular contentious applications. While the new procedures may mean that some applications take longer to resolve, I do not expect that a large number of applications will be referred to the committee, or to me. The Government wish to see the industry build on its successful development to date, while ensuring that the unique scenic and nature conservation values of the Highlands and Islands are protected.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry (Plymouth)

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Attorney-General how many applications are currently awaiting first registration at the Plymouth land registry office; what is the average time in completing these registrations; what measures are being introduced to alleviate these delays; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There are currently 37,664 applications awaiting first registration at the Plymouth district land registry. The current average completion time is 40 weeks. This is six weeks less than the average time at the end of October because additional staff have been recruited and trained and more staff-time is now being allocated to first registrations. It is hoped that this improvement will continue.

Extradition Warrants

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all cases where extradition warrants for persons accused of terrorist offences have been issued in the United Kingdom for execution in the Republic of Ireland during the past five years, showing the stage reached or final result in each case.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to answers given on 8 and on 13 December 1988 by my hon. Friends the Ministers of State for the Home Office, the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office. Since their answers were given, one request for extradition made this year to the Republic of Ireland, in the case of Patrick Ryan, has been refused.

Warrants issued in the United Kingdom for the arrests of 23 fugitives believed to be in the Republic of Ireland now are outstanding; but I do not think that it would be in the public interest to specify how many of these warrants have been issued in connection with terrorist offences.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list each of the applications that he has made to the Republic of Ireland for the extradition of suspects on terrorist charges over the last five years, setting out in each case whether the outcome was successful and, where not successful, why it was not successful, and indicating in each case whether the process was completed before or after the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to answers given on 8 and on 13 December 1988 by my hon. Friends the Ministers of State for the Home Office, the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office. The Anglo-Irish Agreement took effect on 24 November 1985. Since their answers were given, one request for extradition made this year to the Republic of Ireland, in the case of Patrick Ryan, has been refused.

Warrants issued in the United Kingdom for the arrests of 23 fugitives believed to be in the Republic of Ireland now are outstanding; but I do not think it would be in the public interest to specify how many of these warrants have been issued in connection with terrorist offences.

Terrorists

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the names of defendants and the crimes alleged against them in all cases where the provisions of the Republic of Ireland's Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1976 and the United Kingdom's Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 have been invoked, showing the stage reached or final result in each case and particularising those cases involving alleged terrorist offences.

The Attorney-General: Since the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 came into force, the following persons have been tried in the United Kingdom for offences allegedly committed in the Republic of Ireland, with the results shown:

Names	*Crime*	*Result*
Gerard Patrick Fearon	Murder	Convicted. Life imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (1)	Acquitted
	Possessing firearms (2)	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
	Causing grievious bodily harm	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
Thomas Patrick Morgan	Murder	Convicted. Detention at discretion of Secretary of State
	Possessing firearms (1)	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (2)	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
	Causing grievious bodily harm	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
Daniel Joseph O'Rourke	Murder	Convicted of *manslaughter*. 10 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (1)	Acquitted
	Possessing firearms (2)	Acquitted
	Causing grievious bodily harm	Acquitted
Francis Joseph Gormley	Murder	Convicted. Life imprisonment
Owen McCartan Smyth	Counselling/procuring murder	Acquitted
Mark Gerard Hannigan	Attempted murder	Acquitted
	Conspiracy to murder	Convicted. 10 years imprisonment
	Wounding	Convicted. 12 years imprisonment

Names	*Crime*	*Result*
Francis Pius Callaghan	Possessing explosives (1)	Convicted. 4 years imprisonment
	Possessing explosives (2)	Left on file
	Possessing firearms (1)	Convicted. 2 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (2)	Left on file
Patrick Francis Ward	Possessing explosives (1)	Left on file
	Possessing explosives (2)	Left on file
	Possessing firearms (1)	Left on file
	Possessing firearms (2)	Convicted. 2 years imprisonment suspended for 2 years
Neill Joseph Patterson	Causing explosion	Jury discharged
	Conspiracy to cause explosion	Jury discharged
	Possessing explosives	Jury discharged
Gabriel Peter McCormack	Conspiracy to murder	Convicted. 7 years imprisonment
	Aid/abet causing explosion	Convicted. 7 years imprisonment
	Possessing explosives (1)	Convicted. 7yYears imprisonment
	Possessing explosives (2)	Left on file
	Possessing firearms (1)	Convicted. 7 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (2)	Left on file
Eamon Collins	Causing explosion	Acquitted
	Counselling/procuring murder	Acquitted
	Conspiracy to murder	Acquitted
	Causing explosion (1)	Acquitted
	Causing explosion (2)	Acquitted
	Causing explosion (3)	Acquitted
	Causing explosion (4)	Acquitted
	Causing explosion (5)	Acquitted
	Causing explosion (6)	Left on file
	Causing explosion (7)	Acquitted
	Possessing explosives	Acquitted
Christopher Fergus Patrick Ellis	Conspiracy to murder	Acquitted
	Possessing firearms (1)	Convicted. 8 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (2)	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearms (3)	Left on file
	Possessing firearms (4)	Left on file
Francis Edward Orr	Conspiracy to commit arson	Convicted. 8 years imprisonment
	Attempted arson (1)	Convicted. 6 years imprisonment
	Attempted arson (2)	Convicted. 6 years imprisonment
	Attempted arson (3)	Convicted. 6 years imprisonment80
	Attempted arson (4)	Convicted. 6 years imprisonment
Roy Clements	(As for Orr)	(As for Orr)
Raymond Verner	(As for Orr)	(As for Orr)
Gerard Peter McKenna	Possessing explosives (1)	Convicted. 3 years imprisonment
	Possessing explosives (2)	Left on file

Note:
The last of these trials took place in 1987.

As far as the United Kingdom prosecuting authorities are aware, since the Irish Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1976 came into force, the following persons have been tried in the Republic of Ireland for offences allegedly committed in the United Kingdom, with the results shown:

Names	*Crime*	*Result*
James Lynagh	Murder	Acquitted
Aiden McGurk	Murder	Acquitted
Laurence McNally	Murder	Acquitted
Robert Joseph Campbell	Escape	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment
	Shooting to avoid arrest	Convicted. 10 years imprisonment
	Use of firearm in escape (1)	Convicted. 8 years imprisonment
	Use of firearm in escape (2)	Convicted. 8 years imprisonment
	Possessing firearm	Convicted. 8 years imprisonment
Michael James Ryan	(As for Campbell)	(As for Campbell)
Michael Anthony McKee	(As for Campbell)	(As for Campbell)
Anthony Gerald Sloan	(As for Campbell)	(As for Campbell)
Paul Patrick Magee	(As for Campbell)	(As for Campbell)
Angelo Fusco	(As for Campbell)	(As for Campbell)
Gerald Anthony Tuite	Possessing explosives	Convicted. 10 years imprisonment
Eilish Flynn	Possessing firearms	Convicted. 5 years imprisonment suspended
Seamus Soraghan	Murder	Convicted. Life imprisonment

Note: The last of these trials took place in 1983.

On 24 November I invited the Irish Attorney-General to give consideration to the prosecution in the Republic of Ireland of Gerard Michael Sloan for offences in the United Kingdom of escape and of using firearms in the course of an escape from lawful custody. I understand that charges have since been preferred against him.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

79. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have come to the end of their bridging allowance without the offer of a YTS place.

80. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have come to the end of their bridging allowance without the offer of a YTS place.

81. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have come to the end of their bridging allowance without the offer of a YTS place.

82. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have come to the end of their bridging allowance without the offer of a YTS place.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available nationally. However, I am satisfied that the Training Agency has made available more than sufficient YTS places to meet the potential uptake.

Parental Leave

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the European Commission draft directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government believe that such matters are best dealt with between employers and employees according to their particular circumstances and so remain opposed to the introduction of any such prescriptive measures.

Wages Councils

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the average weekly earnings of an employee aged over 21 years, employed in each sector in respect of which wages councils exist.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information, for April 1988, is published in tables 2 and 3 of part A of the report on the new earnings survey 1988 for a full-time male and female employees; and in table 176 of part F for part-time female employees. The figures relate to those on adult rates of pay, irrespective of age, whose earnings were not affected by absence. A copy of the report is in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of persons currently in employment broken down between the sexes.

Mr. Lee: In June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the work force in employment in Great Britain was 25,174,000; of which 14,365,000 were males and 10,809,000 were females. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed, Her Majesty's forces, and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of (i) employees in employment and (ii) self-employed persons, both separately and together, by region and nationally, in January 1986 and at the latest available date, with the increase in numbers and in percentage terms over this period in each case.

Mr. Lee: There are no estimates for January 1986. The closest date for which figures are available is December 1985, however comparisons of data for December 1985 and June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, are affected by seasonal factors. The table shows data for December 1985, June 1986 and June 1988 and changes over the period June 1986 to June 1988.

Region	*Changes between June 1986 and June 1988*[1]			*Percentage changes between June 1986 and June 1988*		
	Employees in employment	*Self-employed*	*Total employees in employment and self-employed*	*Employees in employment*	*Self-employed*	*Total employees in employment and self-employed*
	(Thousands)	*(Thousands)*	*(Thousands)*	*(Per cent.)*	*(Per cent.)*	*(Per cent.)*
South East	215	183	398	2·9	20·2	4·8
East Anglia	72	29	101	9·4	27·6	11·6
South West	33	31	64	2·1	12·1	3·5
West Midlands	80	29	109	4·0	15·5	4·9
East Midlands	42	30	72	2·8	18·0	4·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	33	32	65	1·8	14·8	3·2
North West	2	22	24	0·1	8·2	0·9
North	27	7	34	2·5	6·7	2·9
Wales	13	0	13	1·5	0·0	1·3
Scotland	1	−3	−2	0·1	−1·5	−0·1
GREAT BRITAIN	519	358	877	2·5	13·9	3·7

[1] The latest date for which figures are available.

Region	December 1985 Employees in employment '000s	December 1985 Self employed '000s	December 1985 Total employees in employment and self employed '000s	June 1986 Employees in employment	June 1986 Self employed	June 1986 Total employees in employment and self employed	June 1988[1] Employees in employment	June 1988[1] Self employed	June 1988[1] Total employees in employment and self employed
South East	7,365	904	8,269	7,353	904	8,257	7,568	1,087	8,655
East Anglia	750	110	860	762	105	867	834	134	968
South West	1,548	254	1,802	1,566	256	1,822	1,599	287	1,886
West Midlands	2,025	186	2,211	2,016	187	2,203	2,096	216	2,312
East Midlands	1,502	162	1,664	1,517	167	1,684	1,559	197	1,756
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,795	219	2,014	1,786	216	2,002	1,819	248	2,067
North West	2,297	267	2,564	2,262	267	2,529	2,264	289	2,553
North	1,080	105	1,185	1,078	105	1,183	1,105	112	1,217
Wales	872	150	1,022	861	154	1,015	874	154	1,028
Scotland	1,897	203	2,100	1,887	205	2,092	1,888	202	2,090
Great Britain	21,131	2,558	23,689	21,088	2,567	23,655	21,607	2,925	24,532

[1] The latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out by counties, local authority districts and nationally, the level of unemployment in January 1986 and at the latest available date, with the fall in numbers and in percentage terms in each case.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. Table A shows the number of unemployed claimants for each county in Great Britain at January 1986 and November 1988 (latest available date), together with the actual and percentage change over the period. Table B gives the corresponding figures for each local authority district in the United Kingdom and nationally. Unemployment statistics categorised by county are unavailable for Northern Ireland.

The figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in the coverage from September 1988 due to the introduction of new benefit regulations for young people aged under 18.

Table A

The change in the level of unemployment in each county in Great Britain between January 1986 and November 1988

County	Unemployed claimants January 1986	Unemployed claimants November 1988	Change	Per cent. change
Bedfordshire	23,897	10,313	−13,584	−56·8
Berkshire	23,835	9,394	−14,441	−60·6
Buckinghamshire	19,658	7,592	−12,066	−61·4
East Sussex	31,128	15,180	−15,948	−51·2
Essex	66,487	28,889	−37,598	−56·6
Hampshire	63,433	30,032	−33,401	−52·7
Hertfordshire	31,068	13,488	−17,580	−56·6
Isle of Wight	7,551	4,892	−2,659	−35·2
Kent	71,599	32,505	−39,094	−54·6
Oxfordshire	18,188	6,879	−11,309	−62·2
Surrey	22,581	8,771	−13,810	−61·2
West Sussex	19,280	7,175	−12,105	−62·8
Cambridgeshire	25,826	11,380	−14,446	−55·9
Norfolk	37,554	18,920	−18,634	−49·6
Suffolk	24,219	11,344	−12,875	−53·2
Greater London	413,938	253,340	−160,598	−38·8
Avon	48,318	27,709	−20,609	−42·7
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	28,987	17,741	−11,246	−38·8
Devon	52,484	31,398	−21,086	−40·2
Dorset	27,233	11,846	−15,387	−56·5
Gloucestershire	22,291	10,616	−11,675	−52·4
Somerset	18,533	9700	−8,833	−47·7
Wiltshire	22,167	10,080	−12,087	−54·5
Hereford and Worcester	33,314	15,862	−17,452	−52·4
Shropshire	23,314	11,406	−11,098	−51·1
Staffordshire	55,896	29,900	−25,996	−46·5
Warwickshire	23,289	12,215	−11,074	−47·6
West Midlands	220,503	131,612	−88,891	−40·3
Derbyshire	50,462	33,859	−16,603	−32·9
Leicestershire	40,657	21,692	−18,965	−46·7
Lincolnshire	31,064	17,719	−13,345	−43·0
Northamptonshire	26,230	10,706	−15,524	−59·2
Nottinghamshire	61,230	42,580	−18,650	−30·5
Humberside	60,106	37,564	−22,542	−37·5
North Yorkshire	29,589	17,311	−12,278	−41·5
South Yorkshire	107,013	73,024	−33,989	−31·8
West Yorkshire	127,593	77,563	−50,030	−39·2
Cheshire	54,590	31,424	−23,166	−42·4

County	Unemployed claimants			
	January 1986	November 1988	Change	Per cent. change
Greater Manchester	183,799	116,662	−67,137	−36·5
Lancashire	82,708	48,039	−34,669	−41·9
Merseyside	142,696	98,610	−44,086	30·9
Cumbria	24,359	15,191	−9,168	−37·6
Cleveland	56,424	36,150	−20,274	−35·9
Durham	44,097	27,522	−16,575	−37·6
Northumberland	167,949	12,505	−4,444	−26·2
Tyne and Wear	104,402	70,294	−34,108	−32·7
Clwyd	25,786	14,431	−11,355	−4·0
Dyfed	21,525	14,220	−7,305	−33·9
Gwent	30,718	18,443	−12,275	−40·0
Gwynedd	16,199	10,958	−5,241	−32·4
Mid Glamorgan	37,197	22,612	−14,585	−39·2
Powys	5,188	2,751	−2,437	−47·0
South Glamorgan	27,348	16,814	−10,534	−38·5
West Glamorgan	26,407	15,539	−10,868	−41·2
Borders region	3,882	2,439	−1,443	−37·2
Central region	19,955	12,561	−7,394	−37·1
Dumfries and Galloway region	8,547	6,146	−2,401	−28·1
Fife region	23,153	16,355	−6,798	−29·4
Grampian region	18,941	15,342	−3,599	−19·0
Highland region	14,669	10,753	−3,916	−26·7
Lothian region	48,063	33,525	−14,538	−30·3
Strathclyde region	203,168	144,817	−58,351	−28·7
Tayside region	27,146	18,155	−8,991	−33·1
Orkney Islands	853	718	−135	−15·8
Shetland Islands	805	641	−164	−20·4
Western Isles	1,935	2,149	214	11·1

Table B

The change in the level of unemployment in each local authority district in the United Kingdom and Nationally between January 1986 and November 1988

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants			
	January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Luton	10,382	5,270	−5,112	−49·2
Mid Bedfordshire	3,094	1,152	−1,942	−62·8
North Bedfordshire	6,005	2,389	−3,616	−60·2
South Bedfordshire	4,416	1,502	−2,914	−66·0
Bracknell	3,304	1,123	−1,911	−63·0
Newbury	3,378	1,203	−2,175	−64·4
Reading	6,786	2,540	−4,246	−62·6
Slough	4,762	2,183	−2,579	−54·2
Windsor and Maidenhead	3,297	1,326	−1,971	−59·8
Wokingham	2,578	1,019	−1,559	−60·5
Aylesbury Vale	3,861	1,435	−2,426	−62·8
Chiltern	1,763	684	−1,079	−61·2
Milton Keynes	8,688	3,257	−5,431	−62·5
South Buckinghamshire	1,342	571	−771	−57·5
Wycombe	4,004	1,645	−2,359	−58·9
Brighton	10,187	5,798	−4,389	−43·1
Eastbourne	3,450	1,592	−1,858	−53·9
Hastings	4,826	2,021	−2,805	−58·1
Hove	4,673	2,442	−2,231	−47·7
Lewes	2,735	1,245	−1,490	−54·5
Rother	2,573	1,098	−1,475	−57·3
Wealden	2,684	984	−1,700	−63·3
Basildon	9,073	3,914	−5,159	−56·9
Braintree	4,282	1,562	−2,720	−63·5
Brentwood	2,083	824	−1,259	−60·4
Castle Point	3,668	1,441	−2,227	−60·7
Chelmsford	4,378	1,909	−2,469	−56·4
Colchester	6,330	2,841	−3,489	−55·1
Epping Forest	3,962	1,929	−2,033	−51·3
Harlow	4,073	1,805	−2,268	−55·7
Maldon	1,939	699	−1,240	−64·0
Rochford	2,507	971	−1,536	−61·3
Southend-on-Sea	8,841	3,823	−5,018	−56·8
Tendring	6,047	3,169	−2,878	−47·6
Thurrock	7,729	3,440	−4,289	−55·5
Uttlesford	1,575	562	−1,013	−64·3
Basingstoke and Deane	4,168	1,383	−2,785	−66·8
East Hampshire	2,421	1,090	−1,331	−55·0
Eastleigh	3,181	1,364	−1,817	−57·1
Fareham	3,269	1,484	−1,785	−54·6

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants			
	January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Gosport	3,729	1,893	−1,836	−49·2
Hart	1,493	633	−860	−57·6
Havant	6,638	2,941	−3,697	−55·7
New Forest	5,192	2,628	−2,564	−49·4
Portsmouth	11,860	6,096	−5,764	−48·6
Rushmoor	2,446	1,090	−1,356	−55·4
Southampton	13,792	7,404	−6,388	−46·3
Test Valley	2,802	1,010	−1,792	−64·0
Winchester	2,442	1,016	−1,426	−58·4
Broxbourne	2,742	1,486	−1,256	−45·8
Dacorum	4,319	1,733	−2,586	−59·9
East Hertfordshire	2,743	1,103	−1,640	−59·8
Hertsmere	2,612	1,217	−1,395	−53·4
North Hertfordshire	3,909	1,582	−2,327	−59·5
St. Albans	3,154	1,324	−1,830	−58·0
Stevenage	3,818	1,428	−2,390	−62·6
Three Rivers	1,908	874	−1,034	−54·2
Watford	2,827	1,430	−1,397	−49·4
Welwyn Hatfield	3,036	1,311	−1,725	−56·8
Medina	4,043	2,666	−1,377	−34·1
South Wight	3,508	2,226	−1,282	−36·6
Ashford	4,108	1,625	−2,483	−60·4
Canterbury	5,884	2,780	−3,104	−52·8
Dartford	3,204	1,512	−1,692	−52·8
Dover	5,291	2,901	−2,390	−45·2
Gillingham	5,201	2,141	−3,060	−58·8
Gravesham	5,202	2,491	−2,711	−52·1
Maidstone	5,039	1,765	−3,274	−65·0
Rochester-upon-Medway	9,332	3,794	−5,538	−59·3
Sevenoaks	3,107	1,401	−1,706	−54·9
Shepway	4,794	2,651	−2,143	−44·7
Swale	5,894	2,871	−3,023	−51·3
Thanet	8,515	4,593	−3,922	−46·1
Tonbridge and Malling	3,150	1,091	−2,059	−65·4
Tonbridge Wells	2,878	889	−1,989	−69·1
Cherwell	3,812	1,391	−2,421	−63·5
Oxford	5,401	2,395	−3,006	−55·7
South Oxfordshire	3,459	1,251	−2,208	−63·8
Vale of White Horse	2,983	974	−2,009	−67·4
West Oxfordshire	2,533	868	−1,665	−65·7
Elmbridge	2,433	957	−1,476	−60·7
Epsom and Ewell	1,416	667	−749	−52·9
Guildford	2,845	1,002	−1,843	−64·8
Mole Valley	1,544	644	−900	−58·3
Reigate and Banstead	2,811	1,049	−1,762	−62·7
Runnymede	1,745	651	−1,094	−62·7
Spelthorne	2,559	934	−1,625	−63·5
Surrey Heath	1,591	541	−1,050	−66
Tandridge	1,681	692	−989	−58·8
Waverley	2,056	767	1,289	−62·7
Woking	1,900	867	−1,033	−54·4
Adur	1,833	498	−1,335	−72·8
Arun	4,027	1,573	−2,454	−60·9
Chichester	2,722	987	−1,735	−63·7
Crawley	2,616	906	−1,710	−65·4
Horsham	2,442	757	−1,685	−69·0
Mid Sussex	2,672	928	−1,744	−65·3
Worthing	2,968	1,526	−1,442	−48·6
Cambridge	3,947	1,933	−2,0[illegible]	−51·0
East Cambridgeshire	1,518	524	−[illegible]4	−65·5
Fenland	4,040	1,851	−2,189	−54·2
Huntingdon	4,483	1,910	−2,573	−57·4
Peterborough	9,476	4,284	−5,192	−54·8
South Cambridgeshire	2,362	878	−1,484	−62·8
Breckland	4,703	1,778	−2,925	−62·2
Broadland	3,117	1,389	−1,728	−55·4
Great Yarmouth	6,726	4,405	−2,321	−34·5
North Norfolk	3,898	1,745	−2,153	−55·2
Norwich	9,223	5,037	−4,186	−45·4
South Norfolk	3,394	1,526	−1,868	−55·0
West Norfolk	6,493	3,040	−3,453	−53·2
Babergh	2,599	1,119	−1,480	−56·9
Forest Heath	1,565	698	−867	−55·4
Ipswich	5,956	2,681	−3,275	−55·0
Mid Suffolk	2,099	917	−1,182	−56·3
St. Edmundsbury	3,115	1,290	−1,825	−58·6

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants			
	January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Suffolk Coastal	2,971	1,303	−1,668	−56·1
Waveney	5,914	3,336	−2,578	−43·6
City of London	119	69	−50	−42·0
Camden LB	15,736	10,371	−5,365	−34·1
Hackney LB	20,916	14,644	−6,272	−30·0
Hammersmith LB	12,724	8,091	−4,633	−36·4
Haringey LB	17,742	12,270	−5,472	−30·8
Islington LB	16,935	11,297	−5,638	−33·3
Kensington and Chelsea LB	9,849	5,526	−4,323	−43·9
Lambeth LB	26,583	17,209	−9,374	−35·3
Lewisham LB	18,577	12,453	−6,124	−33·0
Newham LB	17,664	11,318	−6,346	−35·9
Southwark LB	21,751	15,295	−6,456	29·7
Tower Hamlets LB	16,275	11,203	−5,072	−31·2
Wandsworth LB	17,021	9,861	−7,160	−42·1
Westminster LB	14,080	7,725	−6,355	−45·1
Barking and Dagenham LB	8,803	4,108	−4,695	−53·3
Barnet LB	11,256	6,427	−4,829	−42·9
Bexley LB	8,817	4,608	−4,209	−47·7
Brent LB	16,801	11,928	−4,873	−29·0
Bromley LB	10,261	5,433	−4,828	−47·1
Croydon LB	14,033	7,489	−6,544	−46·6
Ealing LB	15,334	8,756	−6,578	−42·9
Enfield LB	10,841	6,632	−4,209	−38·8
Greenwich LB	15,677	9,402	−6,275	−40·0
Harrow LB	6,363	3,871	−2,492	−39·2
Havering LB	9,530	4,396	−5,134	−53·9
Hillingdon LB	7,536	3,651	−3,885	−51·6
Hounslow LB	9,646	4,985	−4661	−48·3
Kingston-upon-Thames LB	4,036	1,941	−2,095	−51·9
Merton LB	6,591	3,411	−3,180	−48·3
Redbridge LB	9,441	5,312	−4,129	−43·7
Richmond-upon-Thames LB	5,188	2,803	−2,385	−46·0
Sutton LB	5,261	2,401	−2860	−54·4
Waltham Forest LB	12,551	8,454	−4,097	−32·6
Bath	3,930	2,189	−1,741	−44·3
Bristol	26,915	15,886	−11,029	−41·0
Kingswood	3,282	1,813	−1,469	−44·8
Northavon	4,366	2,354	−2,012	−46·1
Wansdyke	2,537	1,316	−1,221	−48·1
Woodspring	7,288	4,151	−3,137	−43·0
Caradon	3,470	2,233	−1,237	−35·7
Carrick	4,983	2,938	−2,045	−41·0
Kerrier	6,164	3,768	−2,396	−38·9
North Cornwall	3,689	2,284	−1,405	−38·1
Penwith	4,609	3,005	−1,604	−34·8
Restormel	5,937	3,453	−2,484	−41·8
Scilly Isles	135	60	−75	−55·6
East Devon	4,131	2,291	−1,840	−44·5
Exeter	5,258	2,794	−2,464	−46·9
Mid Devon	2,045	1,212	−833	−40·7
North Devon	4,527	2,533	−1,994	−44·1
Plymouth	15,734	11,298	−4,436	−28·2
South Hams	2,756	1,679	−1,077	−39·1
Teignbridge	4,808	2,231	−2,577	−53·6
Torbay	8,715	4,857	−3,858	−44·3
Torridge	2,792	1,451	−1,341	−48·0
West Devon	1,718	1,052	−666	−38·8
Bournemouth	9,791	4,192	−5,599	−57·2
Christchurch	1,462	588	−874	−59·8
North Dorset	1,351	587	−764	−56·6
Poole	5,553	2,262	−3,291	−59·3
Purbeck	1,394	589	−805	−57·8
West Dorset	2,412	1,189	−1,223	−50·7
Weymouth and Portland	3,121	1,601	−1,520	−48·7
Wimborne	2,149	838	−1,311	−61·0
Cheltenham	4,178	2,208	−1,970	−47·2
Cotswold	1,958	786	−1,172	−59·9
Forest of Dean	4,219	1,754	−2,465	−58·4
Gloucester	5,387	2,601	−2,786	−51·7
Stroud	3,888	1,919	−1,969	−50·6
Tewkesbury	2,661	1,348	−1,313	−49·3
Mendip	3,518	1,749	−1,769	−50·3
Sedgemoor	4,566	2,477	−2,089	−45·8
Taunton Deane	4,042	2,057	−1,985	−49·1
West Somerset	1,570	966	−604	−38·5

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants			
	January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Yeovil	4,837	2,451	−2,386	−49·3
Kennet	2,196	914	−1,282	−58·4
North Wiltshire	3,744	1,882	−1,862	−49·7
Salisbury	3,633	1,616	−2,017	−55·5
Thamesdown	8,595	3,750	−4,845	−56·4
West Wiltshire	3,999	1,918	−2,081	−52·0
Bromsgrove	4,405	2,313	−2,092	−47·5
Hereford	2,957	1,520	−1,437	−48·6
Leominster	1,753	770	−983	−56·1
Malvern Hills	3,457	1,607	−1,850	−53·5
Redditch	4,870	2,169	−2,701	−55·5
South Herefordshire	2,202	1,021	−1,181	−53·6
Worcester	4,478	2,267	−2,211	−49·4
Wychavon	3,847	1,732	−2,115	−55·0
Wyre Forest	5,345	2,463	−2,882	−53·9
Bridgnorth	2,475	1,062	−1,413	−57·1
North Shropshire	2,227	1,227	−1,000	−44·9
Oswestry	1,640	838	−802	−48·9
Shrewsbury and Atcham	4,479	2,328	−2,151	−48·0
South Shropshire	1,655	770	−885	−53·5
The Wrekin	10,838	5,181	−5,657	−52·2
Cannock Chase	5,706	3,213	−2,493	−43·7
East Staffordshire	5,184	2,634	−2,550	−49·2
Lichfield	4,377	2,182	−2,195	−50·2
Newcastle-under-Lyme	5,816	3,354	−2,462	−42·3
South Staffordshire	5,509	3,126	−2,383	−43·3
Stafford	5,219	2,618	−2,601	−49·8
Staffordshire Moorlands	3,768	1,875	−1,893	−50·2
Stoke-on-Trent	15,381	8,244	−7,137	−46·4
Tamworth	4,936	2,654	−2,282	−46·2
North Warwickshire	3,069	1,730	−1,339	−43·6
Nuneaton	7,046	4,157	−2,889	−41·0
Rugby	4,227	2,039	−2,188	−51·8
Stratford-on-Avon	3,508	1,577	−1,931	−55·1
Warwick	5,439	2,712	−2,727	−50·1
Birmingham	93,238	58,740	−34,498	−37·0
Coventry	26,285	14,861	−11,424	−43·5
Dudley	20,271	11,166	−9,105	−44·9
Sandwell	26,391	15,452	−10,939	−41·5
Solihull	11,226	6,478	−4,748	−42·3
Walsall	20,193	11,154	−9,039	−44·8
Wolverhampton	22,899	13,761	−9,138	−39·9
Amber Valley	4,971	3,227	−1,744	−35·1
Bolsover	4,177	3,273	−904	−21·6
Chesterfield	6,392	4,850	−1,542	−24·1
Derby	14,833	9,807	−5,026	−33·9
Erewash	5,649	3,062	−2,587	−45·8
High Peak	4,131	2,293	−1,838	−44·5
North East Derbyshire	5,325	4,168	−1,157	−21·7
South Derbyshire	2,776	1,754	−1,022	−36·8
West Derbyshire	2,208	1,425	−783	−35·5
Blaby	2,346	1,106	−1,204	−52·9
Charnwood	4,955	2,612	−2,343	−47·3
Harborough	1,771	725	−1,046	−59·1
Hinkley and Bosworth	3,274	1,534	−1,740	−53·2
Leicester	20,520	11,531	−8,989	−43·8
Melton	1,643	742	−901	−54·8
North West Leicestershire	3,630	2,196	−1,434	−39·5
Oadby and Wigston	1,488	754	−734	−49·3
Rutland	1,030	492	−538	−52·2
Boston	3,252	1,442	−1,810	−55·7
East Lindsey	7,012	4,609	−2,403	−34·3
Lincoln	6,101	4,247	−1,854	−30·4
North Kesteven	3,292	1,773	−1,519	−46·1
South Holland	2,820	1,182	−1,638	−58·1
South Kesteven	4,792	2,340	−2,452	−51·2
West Lindsey	3,795	2,126	−1,669	−44·0
Corby	4,913	1,768	−3,145	−64·0
Daventry	2,112	853	−1,259	−59·6
East Northamptonshire	2,038	808	1,230	−60·4
Kettering	3,080	1,341	−1,739	−56·5
Northampton	8,971	3,866	−5,105	−56·9
South Northamptonshire	1,730	580	−1,150	−66·5
Wellingborough	3,386	1,490	−1,896	−56
Ashfield	5,849	4,583	−1,266	−21·6
Bassetlaw	6,772	4,716	−2,056	−30·4

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants			
	January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Broxtowe	4,929	2,837	−2,092	−42·4
Gedling	4,674	3,085	−1,589	−34
Mansfield	6,049	5,070	−979	−16·2
Newark	5,206	3,558	−1,648	−31·7
Nottingham	23,946	16,542	−7,404	−30·9
Rushcliffe	3,805	2,189	−1,616	−42·5
Beverley	4,150	2,526	−1,624	−39·1
Boothferry	3,791	2,126	−1,665	−43·9
Cleethorpes	4,557	2,950	−1,607	−35·3
East Yorkshire	3,867	2,359	−1,508	−39
Glanford	3,513	1,960	−1,553	−44·2
Great Grimsby	7,381	5,169	−2,212	−30·0
Holderness	2,501	1,460	−1,041	−41·6
Kingston-upon-Hull	24,843	15,856	−8,987	−36·2
Scunthorpe	5,503	3,158	−2,345	−42·6
Craven	1,576	914	−662	−42·0
Hambleton	2,948	1,576	1,372	46·5
Harrowgate	4,821	2,238	−2,583	−53·6
Richmondshire	1,719	974	−745	−43·3
Ryedale	2,611	1,478	−1,133	−43·4
Scarborough	6,380	4,007	−2,373	−37·2
Selby	3,518	2,195	−1,323	−37·6
York	6,016	3,929	−2,087	−34·7
Barnsley	18,479	12,649	−5,830	−31·6
Doncaster	25,185	16,865	−8,320	−33·0
Rotherham	20,547	13,934	−6,613	−32·2
Sheffield	42,802	29,576	−13,226	−30·9
Bradford	30,965	18,788	−12,177	−39·3
Calderdale	10,588	5,919	−4,669	−44·1
Kirklees	20,857	12,153	−8,704	−41·7
Leeds	44,321	26,795	−17,526	−39·5
Wakefield	20,862	13,908	−6,954	−33·3
Chester	7,149	4,290	−2,858	−40·0
Congleton	2,950	1,609	−1,341	−45·5
Crewe and Nantwich	5,099	3,083	−2,016	−39·5
Ellesmere Port and Neston	6,229	3,435	−2,794	−44·9
Halton	10,940	7,130	−3,810	−34·8
Macclesfield	5,432	2,898	−2,534	−46·7
Vale Royal	6,381	3,347	−3,034	−47·6
Warrington	10,411	5,632	−4,779	−45·9
Bolton	17,348	11,356	−5,992	−34·5
Bury	9,445	5,247	−4,198	−44·5
Manchester	45,567	32,107	−13,460	−29·5
Oldham	13,704	8,633	−5,071	−37·0
Rochdale	14,514	8,964	−5,550	−38·2
Salford	19,920	12,228	−7,692	−38·6
Stockport	14,605	8,108	−6,497	−44·5
Tameside	13,878	8,535	−5,343	−38·5
Trafford	12,606	7,461	−5,145	−40·8
Wigan	22,212	14,023	−8,189	−36·9
Blackburn	9,463	5,638	−3,825	−40·4
Blackpool	12,421	7,579	−4,842	−39·0
Burnley	6,085	3,280	−2,805	−46·1
Chorley	4,529	2,471	−2,058	−45·4
Fylde	2,812	1,437	−1,375	−48·9
Hyndburn	4,151	2,369	−1,782	−42·9
Lancaster	7,581	5,213	−2,368	−31·2
Pendle	4,839	2,330	−2,509	−51·9
Preston	9,126	5,561	−3,565	−39·1
Ribble Valley	1,386	680	−706	−50·9
Rossendale	3,014	1,673	−1,341	−44·5
South Ribble	4,730	2,521	−2,209	−46·7
West Lancashire	7,693	4,601	−3,092	−40·2
Wyre	4,878	2,686	−2,192	−44·9
Knowsley	20,487	13,492	−6,995	−34·1
Liverpool	57,680	42,406	−15,274	−26·5
St. Helens	15,056	9,708	−5,348	−35·5
Sefton	22,378	14,892	−7,486	−33·5
Wirral	27,095	18,112	−8,983	−33·2
Allerdale	5,941	3,743	−2,198	−37·0
Barrow-in-Furness	3,744	2,695	−1,049	−28·0
Carlisle	5,514	3,289	−2,225	−40·4
Copeland	4,327	2,960	−1,367	−31·6
Eden	1,721	845	−876	−50·9
Rhymney Valley	8,055	4,459	−3,596	−44·6
Taff-Ely	5,880	3,647	−2,233	−38·0

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Brecknock	1,889	1,066	−823	−43·6
Montgomeryshire	2,302	1,183	−1,119	−48·6
Radnor	997	502	−495	−49·7
Cardiff	20,442	12,604	−7,838	−38·3
Vale of Glamorgan	6,906	4,210	−2,696	−39·0
Afan	3,868	1,916	−1,952	−50·5
Lliw Valley	3,461	2,155	−1,306	−37·7
Neath	4,788	2,580	−2,208	−46·1
Swansea	14,290	8,888	−5,402	−37·8
Berwickshire	699	484	−215	−30·8
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,293	801	−492	−38·1
Roxburgh	1,351	771	−580	−42·9
Tweedale	539	383	−156	−28·9
Clackmannan	3,324	2,451	−873	−26·3
Falkirk	11,281	6,762	−4,519	−40·1
Stirling	5,350	3,348	−2,002	−37·4
Annandale and Eskdale	2,019	1,188	−831	−41·2
Nithsdale	3,148	2,351	−797	−25·3
Stewartry	1,136	839	−297	−26·1
Wigton	2,244	1,768	−476	−21·2
Dunfermline	8,275	5,927	−2,348	−28·4
Kirkcaldy	12,107	8,507	−3,600	−29·7
North East Fife	2,771	1,921	−850	−30·7
Aberdeen City	8,643	7,263	−1,380	−16·0
Banff and Buchan	3,340	2,609	−731	−21·9
Gordon	1,651	1,372	−279	−16·9
Kincardine and Deeside	1,117	1,013	−104	−9·3
Moray	4,190	3,085	−1,105	−26·4
Badenock and Strathspey	729	483	−246	−33·7
Caithness	1,638	1,339	−299	−18·3
Inverness	3,812	2,987	−825	−21·6
Lochaber	1,866	1,116	−750	−40·2
Nairn	686	590	−96	−14·0
Ross and Cromarty	4,091	2,821	−1,270	−31·0
Skye and Lochalsh	836	610	−226	−27·0
Sutherland	1,011	807	−204	−20·2
East Lothian	3,966	3,137	−829	−20·9
Edinburgh	28,280	20,780	−7,500	−26·5
Midlothian	4,651	3,324	−1,327	−28·5
West Lothian	11,166	6,284	−4,882	−43·7
Argyle and Bute	4,101	3,016	−1,085	−26·5
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,237	902	−335	−27·1
Clydebank	4,238	3,145	−1,093	−25·8
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,863	3,152	−1,711	−35·2
Cumnock and Doon Valley	4,764	3,489	−1,275	−26·8
Cunninghame	12,303	8,088	−4,215	−34·3
Dumbarton	6,176	4,372	−1,804	−29·2
East Kilbride	5,329	3,456	−1,873	−35·2
South Lakeland	3,112	1,659	−1,453	−46·7
Hartlepool	9,545	6,278	−3,267	−34·2
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	13,847	8,833	−5,014	−36·2
Middlesbrough	16,875	10,868	−6,007	−35·6
Stockton-on-Tees	16,157	10,171	−5,986	−37·1
Chester-le-Street	3,579	2,215	−1,364	−38·1
Darlington	6,713	4,719	−1,994	−29·7
Derwentside	7,853	4,808	−3,045	−38·8
Durham	4,791	3,280	−1,511	−31·5
Easington	7,211	4,977	−2,234	−31·0
Sedgefield	7,086	3,743	−3,343	−47·2
Teesdale	1,356	733	−623	−45·9
Wear Valley	5,508	3,047	−2,461	−44·7
Alnwick	1,588	1,332	−256	−16·1
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1,423	904	−519	−36·5
Blyth Valley	5,377	3,833	−1,544	−28·7
Castle Morpeth	2,114	1,497	−617	−29·2
Tynedale	2,216	1,310	−906	−40·9
Wansbeck	4,231	3,629	−602	−14·2
Gateshead	17,368	11,341	−6,027	−34·7
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	26,356	18,302	−8,054	−30·6
North Tyneside	15,162	9,987	−5,175	−34·1
South Tyneside	16,084	10,836	−5,248	−32·6
Sunderland	29,432	19,828	−9,604	−32·6
Alyn and Deeside	4,517	2,194	−2,323	−51·4
Colwyn	2,954	1,948	−1,006	−34·1
Delyn	4,793	2,150	−2,643	−55·1
Glyndwr	1,849	1,198	−651	−35·2

Local authority districts	Unemployed claimants January 1986	November 1988	Change	Percentage change
Rhuddlan	4,300	2,732	−1,568	−36·5
Wrexham Maelor	7,373	4,209	−3,164	−42·9
Carmarthen	2,564	1,944	−620	−24·2
Ceredigion	3,567	2,438	−1,129	−31·7
Dinefwr	2,054	1,369	−685	−33·4
Llanelli	4,756	2,926	−1,830	−38·5
Preseli Pembrokeshire	5,118	3,378	−1,740	−34·0
South Pembrokeshire	3,466	2,165	−1,301	−37·5
Blaenau Gwent	6,232	3,905	−2,327	−37·3
Islwyn	4,357	2,551	−1,806	−41·5
Monmouth	3,671	2,050	−1,621	−44·2
Newport	10,234	6,180	−4,054	−39·6
Torfaen	6,224	3,757	−2,467	−39·6
Aberconwy	2,903	1,849	−1,054	−36·3
Arfon	4,273	2,993	−1,280	−30·0
Dwyfor	1,730	1,238	−492	−28·4
Meirionnydd	1,946	1,240	−706	36·3
Ynys Môn—Isle of Anglesey	5,347	3,638	−1,709	−32·0
Cynon Valley	4,772	3,364	−1,408	−29·5
Merthyr Tydfil	4,178	2,821	−1,357	−32·5
Ogwr	8,740	4,847	−3,893	−44·5
Rhondda	5,572	3,474	−2,098	−37·7

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what date the Construction Industry Training Board will be transferred to a non-statutory basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The White Paper, "Employment for the 1990s", makes clear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will be consulting the Construction Industry Training Board and organisations representing employers in the construction industry with a view to drawing up a programme and timetable to manage the transition to a non-statutory basis. Those consultations will begin in the new year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People

5. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to be fully implemented.

28. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to be fully implemented.

41. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to be fully implemented.

50. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to be fully implemented.

Mr. Scott: We are making good progress on implementing the Act. Six key sections are now in force. The remaining sections will be implemented as and when the resources required are identified and made available. We have agreed with local authorities that the next priority is section 7, and we are discussing its resource implications.

19. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes in benefits to aid disabled people he is planning, in the light of the recent findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the Social Security Advisory Committee report.

42. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes in benefits to aid disabled people he is planning, in the light of the recent findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the Social Security Advisory Committee report.

48. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes in benefits to aid disabled people he is planning in the light of the recent findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the Social Security Advisory Committee report.

51. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will implement the proposals made by the Social Security Advisory Committee regarding disabled persons.

61. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes in benefits to aid disabled people he is planning, in the light of the recent findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the Social Security Advisory Committee's report.

62. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking in regard to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' report on the financial circumstances of disabled people.

Mr. Scott: In the period up to July 1989 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is publishing a series of reports on the findings of the surveys of disability in Great Britain carved out between 1985 and 1988. Two reports have already been published covering the prevalence of disability amongst adults and the financial circumstances of disabled adults in private households. Four more reports will follow. Taken together, the six reports will bring together the most comprehensive and detailed information ever collected about disabled people in this country.

On 29 November the Social Security Advisory Committee published a report, "Benefits for Disabled People: a Strategy for Change". In publishing the report the committee's chairman, Peter Barclay, recognised that the Government would need to wait until all the OPCS data were available before reaching any conclusions on whether there are better ways of providing help for disabled people. In examining the OPCS findings we will give careful consideration to the recommendations made in the SSAC report.

49. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much Government expenditure on the disabled has increased since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled has increased from £2·1 billion in 1979-80 to £7·3 billion this year. This is an increase of £3·5 billion (or 90 per cent.) in real terms.

Independent Living Fund

11. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been received by the independent living fund; how many persons have received assistance; and what is the total amount so far paid out by the fund.

44. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been received by the independent living fund; how many persons have received assistance; and what is the total amount so far paid out by the fund.

52. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been received by the independent living fund; how many persons have received assistance; and what is the total amount so far paid out by the fund.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for payments from the independent living fund have been received.

Mr. Scott: As of 30 November 1988, the fund had received 2,502 applications. A total of 354 people have received assistance and 1,574 further cases are still under consideration. In all, the fund has paid out around £125,000.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many discretionary payments are being made in one month from the independent living fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the independent living fund does not compile statistics on the number of discretionary awards—that is awards where the applicant does not fulfil the fund's eligibility criteria and the trustees are required to exercise their discretion.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of regular payments from the independent living fund, at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: Latest estimates are that some 340 to 345 applicants to the fund are receiving regular payments, or have received offers of regular payment conditional upon their receiving the care proposed in their applications.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to publicise the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: Publicity for the independent living fund is a matter for the trustees, but I understand that 16,000 posters and 55,000 leaflets have been produced by the ILF, for distribution to directors of social services, health authorities, voluntary organisations, and so on.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for payments from the independent living fund have been refused.

Mr. Scott: As of 30 November 1988, 574 applications had been unsuccessful.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the £5 million allocated for the independent living fund is being spent on administration costs.

Mr. Scott: Projections of expenditure during the current year suggest that, of the total spent by the independent living fund, around 10 per cent. will be on administration.

Family Credit

12. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects there to be a 100 per cent. take-up of family credit.

23. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects there to be a 100 per cent. take-up of family credit.

34. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects there to be a 100 per cent. take-up of family credit.

56. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects there to be a 100 per cent. take-up of family credit.

Mr. Moore: There are two ways in which it is helpful to measure take-up. One is to count the number of recipients; the other is to look at expenditure. So far as recipients are concerned, we expect to do better than the 50 per cent. take-up eventually achieved by family income supplement. Expenditure is already running at slightly more that we estimated, which suggests that families with higher levels of entitlement are coming forward to make their claims. Experience indicates that even with universal benefits it is not realistic to expect all eligible people to claim.

24. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate on the take-up of family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Members for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) earlier today.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will urgently take steps to simplify and reduce family credit application forms;

(2) what consideration he is giving to complaints about the size and complication of the family credit application forms.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are looking at ways of improving form FC1 and expect to bring a revised version into use in the spring.

Family Credit and Independent Living Fund

13. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what funds he is providing to publicise the existence of *(a)* family credit and *(b)* the independent living fund.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For family credit, the advertising budget is over £3 million in the current financial year. The allocation of funds for publicity for the independent living fund is a matter for the trustees of the fund. The Department will, of course, continue to give the trustees such technical and professional advice and assistance as they require.

Income Support

15. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate for the full annual cost of income support payments to residents in private aged persons' homes.

Mr. Scott: In May 1988, the annual income support expenditure on people in independent residential care and nursing homes as a whole in Great Britain was estimated to be £878 million.

16. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to further increase income support limits for those in residential care and nursing homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend announced on 27 October significant increase in the income support limits for people in residential care homes and nursing homes. These will come into force as part of the general uprating of social security benefits in April 1989.

66. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has so far been spent in special grants to people on income support; what was the comparable figure a year ago; who the main beneficiaries have been and for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provisional figures for the period 11 April to 30 October 1988 for social fund budgeting and crisis loans and community care grants are as follows:

	Budgeting and crisis loans £ *million*	*Community care grants* £ *million*
Expenditure 11 April 1988 to 30 October 1988	61	15
Main beneficiary group percentage of expenditure		
Pensioners	4	14
Disabled	9	13
Unemployed	39	25
Lone parents	40	36
Others	8	12
Main purpose of award percentage of expenditure		
Furniture-household-equipment-washing machines-bedding	77	81
Home improvement-repairs-maintenance-redecoration	3	3
Removal expenses	1	3
Rent in advance	1	0
Travelling expenses	0	5
Clothing and footwear	5	6
HP and other debts	1	0
Living expenses	10	0
Others	1	1

Note: Percentages of less than 0·5 per cent. are shown as 0.

Directly comparable figures for the same period in 1987, before the social fund started, are not available. However expenditure on supplementary benefits single payments in the period 8 April to 26 October 1987 was £100 milion, which was distributed as follows:

Beneficiary group	*Percentage of expenditure*
Supplementary pension (P)	44
Supplementary allowance (unemployed) (E)	45
Supplementary allowance (other) (A)	10

Housing Benefit

17. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of housing benefit transitional protection will lose as a result of the erosion factor in housing benefit in April 1989.

26. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of housing benefit transitional protection will lose as a result of the erosion factor in housing benefit in April 1989.

31. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of housing benefit transitional protection will lose as a result of the erosion factor in housing benefit in April 1989.

32. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of housing benefit transitional protection will lose as a result of the erosion factor in housing benefit in April 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Transitional protection is usually reduced by the amount of any increase in other income which an applicant has received since the transitional protection was awarded. However for housing benefit transitional payments we have decided to limit the reduction to a flat rate deduction of £2 per week from April 1989. This will ensure that the vast majority of those receiving housing benefit transitional payments will gain overall in cash terms. Special arrangements will apply for a very small number of people—less than 1 per cent.—who are largely dependent on social security benefits and who would otherwise see a cash loss.

63. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was paid in housing benefit as direct payment to private landlords during the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that no information is collected centrally on the amount of housing benefit paid direct to landlords.

Expenditure

18. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the amount and proportion of total public expenditure which will be allocated to social security in 1988-89; and what were the comparable figures for five and 10 years before, respectively.

Mr. Scott: In 1978-79, the last year of the Labour Government, expenditure on the social security programme was £16,400 million, just about one quarter of all planned public spending; by 1983-84 spending had reached £35,200 million, about 30 per cent. of the total. The latest estimate is that £47,600 million will be spent on social security in 1988-89, 31 per cent. of the estimated outturn for total planned expenditure.

Child Benefit

20. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he received following his decision to freeze child benefit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) earlier today.

30. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from organisations involved in helping the disabled about the freeze on child benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 27 October, we have received representations on behalf of a number of organisations including those involved in helping the disabled.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he received following his decision to freeze child benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) earlier today.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide in the *Official Report* a table which shows the level of family allowance child benefit in each of the member states of the European Community for a one, two, three and four-child family, using European currency units, at the latest date for which comparable data are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information regarding family allowances/child benefit in each of the member states of the European Community is contained in the Department's annual publication "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities". Copies are held in the Library for each year since 1973.

These tables set out the levels of benefit in the national currencies together with the sterling equivalent converted according to the OECD's purchasing power parity figures as shown in the introduction to the tables.

Conversion rates between European currency units and national currencies are set out in the *Official Journal* of the European Community, copies of which are also held in the Library.

Housing Benefit and Transitional Payments

21. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants for housing benefit and transitional payments are still waiting for their claims to be settled.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: More than 300,000 of the 395,000 applications received to date have been settled. The majority of the remainder are awaiting the return of the inquiry form which is sent to the relevant local authority.

Pensioners

22. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much additional money he plans to spend on poorer pensioners.

Mr. Scott: The package of help for poorer pensioners that we announced on 24 November 1988 will cost an additional amount of almost £100 million in 1989-90 and almost £200 million in a full year.

40. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will benefit from the new scheme for pensioners announced on 24 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that 2·6 million individuals will benefit from the new scheme for pensioners.

46. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he is doing to help poorer pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is proposed that income support and housing benefit paid to pensioners will be restructured from October 1989. There will be new premiums for pensioners aged 75 and over, 80 and over and disabled pensioners. These new premiums will give single pensioners currently on income support an extra £2.50 a week, and couples an extra £3.50 a week over and above the increases announced for the April uprating.

Those pensioners with incomes above income support levels but receiving housing benefit will also benefit.

60. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people whose income places them above the qualifying level for income support, who will benefit from the recent pensions announcement targeting extra help on poorer pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that around 1 million people whose incomes will be above income support levels before the changes will benefit from them. This figure reflects the estimated impact on the community charge benefit system. The numbers benefiting from the changes in October 1989 will be slightly lower than this final figure, reflecting the fact that the community charge will be only partially introduced and that projections for rate rebate caseload are lower than that for community charge benefit.

Pensioners (Living Standards)

25. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how pensioners' living standards have changed since the 1970s.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pensioners' total average net incomes increased in real terms by 23 per cent. during our first seven years in office. Under Labour (1974-79) they increased by just 3 per cent.

Hardship Payments

27. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people under the age of 18 years have been granted hardship payments since September.

Mr. Scott: A total of 1,269.

Claimants (Service)

29. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is being done to speed up the service to social security claimants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am pleased to say that the social security reforms, introduced in April, have produced a benefits system which is easier for claimants to understand and for staff to administer. As a result income support claims are, on average, being processed in five days as compared with six last year and national error rates have fallen from 11·5 per cent. to 9·7 per cent. We expect to be able to improve further in these areas.

In addition some claims processing work is to be relocated away from some London offices where staff recruitment and turnover seriously affect performance standards. These measures plus proposals for a new staff complementing system which directly relates staffing needs to required levels of performance will make a significant impact on standards in local offices with particular problems.

In the longer term the computerisation of social security operations which begins in 1989 will make a major contribution to permanent improvements in the speed and accuracy of benefit payments.

Christmas Bonus

33. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the Christmas bonus to pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

55. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the present value of the pensioners' Christmas bonus if it had been uprated annually, in line with the retail price index, since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The December 1987 value of the Christmas bonus would have been £17·03 if it had been uprated annually since 1979 in line with the movement in the retail prices index.

64. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the value of the pensioners' Christmas bonus.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We believe that the £10 cash bonus remains a genuine help to pensioners at an expensive time of year.

14. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have received the Christmas bonus in the current month.

Mr. Scott: The Christmas bonus exercise has now been completed and over 12 million people—pensioners, widows and the disabled—have received their bonus.

Income Support (EC Nationals)

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the position of EEC nationals who claim income support *(a)* during the first six months of their stay in the United Kingdom and *(b)* during any subsequent period if they have not applied for a resident's permit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: EC nationals are entitled to income support during the first six months of their stay, provided that they meet the normal conditions of the benefit such as availability for work. After six months, continued entitlement depends on whether they are exercising rights of residence under EC law; for example, those classed as "workers" would continue to be entitled to benefit, and those no longer exercising EC treaty rights would not be so entitled.

Social Fund

36. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes in the guidelines for the disbursement of the social fund have been issued to his Department's offices since April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been seven amendments issued since April to the social fund manual. The amendments have covered general changes to the guidance and procedures, changes to the directions and new instructions on cold weather payments.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the take-up of community care grants from the social fund.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 14 December at columns *591-92*.

Mobility Allowance

37. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on retirement pensioners' eligibility for the mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: To qualify for mobility allowance, a person must fulfil the qualifying condition of being unable or virtually unable to walk before his or her 65th birthday. A claim is valid if it is received before the person's 66th birthday, but it can succeed only by showing that the medical conditions were fulfilled by the earlier age. Once an allowance has been awarded it can, if the conditions continue to be fulfilled, remain in payment until the recipient reaches age 75, but my right hon. Friend announced on 27 October that legislation is to be brought forward to extend this upper age limit to 80.

Low-income Families

38. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is being done to help families on low incomes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are making extra resources of £70 million available from next April for families receiving income-related benefits. This is in addition to the £135 million needed to uprate income-related benefit child allowances. These extra resources will benefit up to 3 million children.

Homeless People

39. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will clarify his Department's press release of

19 October about benefits for homeless people on guidance which could draw attention to the power to pay some benefit in the first week of a claim, including a full week's board and lodging payment if this falls due during the period covered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Full instructions were issued to local offices in a circular relating to the income support manual. I have today placed a copy of this circular (IS 14/88) in the Library.

Income Support

43. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the transitional arrangements for claimants on income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support transitional protection is provided under the Income Support (Transitional) Regulations 1987. It is estimated that some 1·4 million former supplementary benefit recipients got this protection when income support was introduced in April 1988. It is further estimated that some 500,000 income support recipients will have transitional additions after the uprating of this benefit in April 1989.

Widows

45. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received concerning benefits for widows since the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since April 1988 we have received 645 such representations.

Disability Premium

47. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to suspend the six months qualifying date for disability premium in cases such as AIDS or cancer.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so at the present time. The income support scheme is being monitored, and the premium structure will be reviewed in the light of the results of that exercise and of the OPCS surveys of disability in Great Britain.

Benefits

53. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is being done to improve levels of consistency and accuracy in the payment of benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Improvements in the benefit service are being sought and achieved in a number of ways. Standards of promptness and accuracy are defined nationally and turned into performance targets for each management unit, with a view to more consistent and higher standards of service. It is clear that since the benefit reforms earlier this year, claims are now being processed more quickly and accurately. The Department expects to secure further improvements through its planned programme of computerisation over the next few years.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young persons in each local district have lost entitlement to any benefit after the end of the eight weeks' bridging allowance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available.

Pensioners (Severe Weather)

54. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he is helping pensioners to keep warm this winter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 8 December 1988.

Income Support (Brent)

57. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the total numbers claiming income support in the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The London borough of Brent is served by the Cricklewood, Neasden, Harlesden, Hendon, Harrow, Edgware, Notting Hill and Ealing local offices of the Department although their boundaries are not conterminous. The total number of persons claiming income support in these offices as at 31 August 1988, the latest information available, is 79,566.

(Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action, which may include a small number of cases not actually in receipt of income support. This figure is provisional and subject to amendment.)

Operational Strategy

58. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate when the operational strategy will be up and running.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have recently brought forward our plans to implement the operational strategy, our huge computerisation programme for social security. We will now complete the computerisation of the main social security benefits handled by local offices by the middle of 1991, nine months earlier than previously planned. The operational strategy will transform the administration of social security, bringing major improvements in service and efficiency, and in job satisfaction for our staff.

Claimants (Rates)

59. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's policy regarding the direct payment of rates to a rating authority from the benefit of income support claimants who have a severe mental disturbance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The direct payment arrangements do not extend to the minimum contribution to domestic rates which claimants are expected to meet from their benefits. Where someone is unable to manage their own affairs another person can be appointed to act on their behalf.

Disabled People (Community Care)

65. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to improve the level of provision of voluntary care for the disabled within the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Disabled people living in the community and their informal carers are best placed to decide on the most

appropriate form of voluntary care arrangements. Such arrangements can be backed up by the local authorities who are required to assess an individual disabled person for a range of services under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 when requested to do so.

Elderly People

67. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review the assistance given to elderly people in private residential accommodation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are looking at assistance for elderly people in residential care as part of the Government's consideration of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care.

Transitional Payments

68. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants is currently in receipt of transitional payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is estimated that slightly more than 20 per cent. of all income support recipients are in receipt of transitional protection.

Widow's Benefits

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the changes in widows' benefits and allowances.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The widows' benefit changes, which came into effect in April 1988, are designed to target help more effectively on older widows and those with dependent children. Transitional arrangements enabled those women widowed before April to retain the category of widow's benefit that they were receiving at the time of the changes. The first statistical information in respect of the new scheme will be available in July 1989.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will investigate the reasons why the invalid care allowance unit, Palatine house, Lancaster road, Preston, has not replied to letters sent by Mrs. R. A. Mottishead of 28 Austin close, Walton Stone, Staffordshire, in respect of her application for an invalid care allowance, reference No. 071553.

Mr. Scott: The invalid care allowance unit does not hold any unanswered letters from Mrs. Mottishead. I regret that processing of her claim has taken longer than is usual and I am writing to my hon. Friend.

Investigators

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what informal liaison arrangements there are between fraud investigators in his Department and the police; and how often during the last 12 months these arrangements have been used in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The need for liaison between the Department's fraud investigators and the police is determined by the nature of the investigation and will vary accordingly. No records are kept in respect of the number of occasions on which contact with the police has been necessary.

Computerisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the *(a)* original cost estimates and *(b)* current estimates of his Department's operational strategy computerisation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 5 December at column *61*.

Departmental Staff

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give staffing allocations for 1988-89 for each of his Department's offices in Bristol, and the comparable staffing levels for 1987-88, broken down by section; with percentage change figures for overall numbers of staff involved in fraud investigation work.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Table 1
Complements for contributory benefits (CB), supplementary benefits (SB), and income support/social fund (IS/SF)

Office	1987-88 CB	1987-88 SB	1987-88 Total	1988-89 CB	1988-89 IS/SF	1988-89 Total	[1] 1988-89 CB	[1] 1988-89 IS/SF	[1] 1988-89 Total
Bristol Central	40	139	179	40	111	151	38	101	139
Bristol East	69	150	219	71	139	210	70	124	194
Bristol Norfield	25	74	99	25	59	84	25	47	72
Bristol South	54	155	209	53	123	176	52	113	165
Bristol West	49	79	128	48	65	113	47	57	104

[1] Local office complements were revised from 24 October 1988.

Table 2
Staff involved in fraud investigation work

Office	1987-88	1988-89	Percentage change
Bristol Central	6·80	6·35	−6·62
Bristol East	4·39	5·59	27·33
Bristol Horfield	4·00	3·68	−8·00
Bristol South	7·46	5·99	−19·71
Bristol West	3·32	2·26	−31·93

Hardship Allowance

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for hardship allowance have been made, over *(a)* the last three months and *(b)* the last six months, by those disqualified from benefit as a result of having been unable to find or take up a YTS place; and how many have been granted;

(2) how many claims for hardship allowance have been received in the Grampian region over the last three months from those disqualified from benefit as a result of not having been able to find or take up a YTS place; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Loss of benefit results, not from a failure to find or take up a YTS place, but from the provision in the Social Security Act 1988 withdrawing general entitlement to income support from 16 and 17-year-olds. There are circumstances in which benefit can, nevertheless, be paid. These include the situation where the young person would otherwise unavoidably suffer severe hardship.

In the 13 weeks following the withdrawal of general entitlement to income support on 12 September, 1,889 applications for a direction by the Secretary of State under the "severe hardship" provision were received. In 1,269 cases a direction was given to enable payment to be made.

While applications from the Grampian region as a whole are not easily identifiable, a total of 66 applications have been received up to now from the Department's offices in Aberdeen; in 42 instances a direction has been given.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost over *(a)* the last three months and *(b)* the last six months, of telephone calls from and to local officers of Department of Social Security as a result of having to refer centrally all hardship claims from those disqualified from benefit as a result of having been unable to find or take a YTS place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. Telephone calls made from local offices to DSS headquarters in relation to young people's claims for income support on grounds of hardship are not differentiated in accounts from other business calls. Equally, no separate record is kept of the cost of telephone calls from headquarters to local offices on the same matter.

Income Support (Young People)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security where income support is provided to persons under the age of 18 years, whether inquiries are made to establish whether such persons are missing or wanted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Vaccine Damage Payments

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many vaccine damage payments have been made since 1980 which arose from damage caused by *(a)* polio vaccination and *(b)* whooping cough vaccination; and what were the ages of the children at the time the vaccination took place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the requested information is not available. The information which is available is set out in the table.

Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme

Number of awards made in the United Kingdom 1979-88 where (a) polio vaccine or a vaccine containing a polio element or (b) pertussis vaccine or a vaccine containing a pertussis element was the claimed cause of severe physical or mental disablement

Year in which award made	*Number of awards in which claimant stated that vaccine was:*	
	Polio or included polio element	*Pertussis or included pertussis element*
1979-80[1]	162	460
1981	29	62
1982	18	31
1983	19	31
1984	8	24
1985	7	25
1986	6	14
1987	6	8
1988[2]	1	3

[1] These figures cannot be apportioned between 1979 and 1980 calendar years.

[2] Up to 30 November 1988.

Information to analyse awards by age at the time of vaccination is not readily available and could be extracted only at disproportionate expense.

Family Credit

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to require or encourage recipients of benefits to have their benefits paid into a bank account.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 5 December at column *63*.

HEALTH

Free Prescriptions

83. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people, whose circumstances and income entitlements have not changed, lost their right to free prescriptions when the new social security regulations came into force in April; and in how many cases the loss was due to a surplus of income over requirements which was under £1.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information.

Waiting Lists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service patients have been sent to private or Army hospitals in an effort to reduce surgery waiting lists.

Mr. Mellor: Over the past five years, service hospitals have treated each year on average 46,000 NHS in-patients and day cases and provided for 237,000 NHS out-patient attendances. In 1986 (latest available figures) some 8,800 NHS surgical patients were treated under contractual arrangements with the independent sector.

In 1987-88, the waiting list fund enabled an additional 4,500 NHS in-patients and day cases from the waiting list and 680 extra NHS out-patients to be treated in service hospitals or the independent sector. In the current year, 6,500 additional in-patients and day cases and 400 extra out-patients are planned to be treated in this way.

Privatisation (Ancillary Services)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the costs so far in redundancy and early retirement payments resulting from the privatisation of National Health Service ancillary services in the northern region.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold centrally records of National Health Service staff redundancies. The figures give the superannuation costs in each year since 1985/86—the first for which figures are available—of premature retirements of ancillary staff within the Northern regional health authority as a result of competitive tendering.

	£
1985-86	100,874·41
1986-87	296,989·20
1987-88	358,729·94
[1]1988-89	206,310·76

[1] (April—November 1988).

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department gives to health authority members asked to consider the grading of a ward sister who meets seven out of 11 criteria laid down to meet consideration for an 'I' grading but who only manages one ward; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Posts should not be graded at a particular level unless they meet the grading definitions, which have been agreed between management and the trade unions, in full.

Nurses (Qualifications)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the costs of each place for state-enrolled nurses taking the state-registered nurse qualification;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* each school of nursing offering courses for state-enrolled nurses wishing to acquire the state-registered nurse qualification; and if he will denote the region in which the school of nursing is located;

(3) if he has been informed of any district health authorities who are now ceasing to lay on courses for state-enrolled nurses wishing to become state-registered nurses; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what steps he has taken to ensure that each regional and district health authority has adequate funds to finance training courses for state-enrolled nurses wishing to acquire the state-registered nurse qualification;

(5) how many state-enrolled nurses have expressed a wish to be retrained to become state-registered nurses.

Mr. Mellor: It is for health authorities to decide their training priorities and allocate funds accordingly. We do not hold information centrally on the way in which individual health authorities choose to exercise this responsibility, or on the number of enrolled nurses wishing to convert to first-level nursing.

Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (ENB) shows that the number of schools of nursing approved to run the 52-week conversion course for enrolled nurses to gain the registered general nursing qualification has increased from three in 1986 to 86 in October 1988. I understand that further courses are in the planning stage. The hon. Member may wish to contact the ENB Resource and Careers Service at PO Box 356, Sheffield S80 SF, which holds details of the schools which have approval. Information on the costs for each place for enrolled nurses is not available.

I am not aware of any health authorities cancelling conversion courses, but if the hon. Member has a specific case, I would be pleased to make inquiries. The Government's response to the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC) Project 2000 proposals, in May 1988, stressed the need to increase the number of enrolled nurse conversion courses. We therefore welcome the circular recently issued by the UKCC, setting out new approaches for conversion, designed to create greater opportunities and flexibility for enrolled nurses to convert to first level training.

Regional health authorities have also been made aware that we shall be discussing firm targets for conversion with them as part of the regional review process.

Radiation Errors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all 21 recommendations made as a result of the inquiry into the radiation errors at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital.

Mr. Mellor: I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library.

Organ Transplant Operations

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of organ transplant operations are successful, organ by organ; how many of these are first-time operations; and what percentage of organs are being required by those who have used up the useful life of their first transplant.

Mr. Mellor: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the survival of first cadaveric kidney grafts at one year is approximately 75 per cent., and for second grafts about 70 per cent. Numbers of subsequent grafts are too small to provide meaningful estimates. In 1986, about 20 per cent. of all cadaveric kidney transplants were regrafts. Many of the original grafts would have required replacement because they had been rejected, or failed for some other reason. Comprehensive statistics on graft survival for other forms of transplantation are not held centrally.

Prescriptions

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the National Health Service of the 25·5 million prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists in 1987.

Mr. Mellor: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to prescriptions for benzodiazepines. The net ingredient cost of the 25·5 million prescriptions for these drugs dispensed in Great Britain in 1987 was £25·3 million.

Benzodiazepine

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds will be allocated under the central funding initiative to projects in the catering specifically for benzodiazepine dependence in 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: None. The central funding initiative was set up in 1983 and grants were awarded for a maximum of three years. Most grants have now therefore ended.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the chief medical officer has met the representatives of the medical profession to discuss benzodiazepine prescribing; what further action has been decided upon to reduce the number of people taking; benzodiazepines; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The chief medical officer held a useful meeting with representatives of the medical profession on 22 November to discuss benzodiazepines. We are considering what action might be taken to follow up some of the helpful suggestions made.

Ms. Primarolo To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to seek to establish precise figures to show the level of trend in benzodiazepine dependence in future.

Mr. Mellor: It is unlikely that it would be possible to obtain accurate statistical data on those dependent on benzodiazopines. What is important is to encourage careful prescribing of benzodiazepines, to promote alternatives to their use, and to provide services for those experiencing problems as a result of their dependence; the hon. Member will be aware of the initiatives the Government are taking in this respect.

Central Funding Initiative

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds will be made available to local statutory and voluntary sector projects under the central funding initiative in 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: A total of £747,006 will be allocated to statutory and voluntary projects in 1989-90 under the central funding initiative for drug misusers.

Drug Misuse

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what allocation of funds will be made to regional health authorities in the United Kingdom for the development of services for drug misusers in 1989-90;

(2) what funds will be allocated to the South West regional health authority for the development of drug misuse services, including services for those dependent on benzodiazepines in 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: We shall announce the allocation of funds to health authorities for 1989-90 shortly.

Bristol Drugs Project

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds will be allocated under the central funding initiative to the Bristol drugs project in future.

Mr. Mellor: Their grant ceased in 1988. A total of £226,070 was awarded to the project under this scheme from 1985 to 1988. Grants under the scheme are for a maximum of three years.

NHS Property and Land

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list sales of National Health property and land by regional health authority area since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information is in the table.

Disposal of NHS land

Region	*Financial year—total receipts*								*£ thousands*
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Northern	150	123	748	413	858	1,436	1,337	6,162	3,872
Yorkshire	766	713	961	1,756	844	1,073	2,005	4,127	5,450
Trent	505	1,596	1,697	1,567	2,342	3,910	4,851	6,308	7,628
East Anglian	251	188	357	699	934	8,184	3,501	3,932	3,812
North West Thames	1,228	1,293	4,358	2,719	6,096	6,724	6,556	24,452	50,255
North East Thames	1,804	1,405	1,039	1,061	3,771	2,828	6,272	13,150	28,005
South East Thames	336	746	1,191	2,197	1,570	2,549	11,054	19,789	25,599
South West Thames	93	3,451	1,989	878	2,409	10,510	9,085	30,157	24,541
Wessex	1,323	748	383	461	1,238	1,956	4,687	10,216	5,678
Oxford	922	1,619	1,194	2,287	1,522	1,745	7,559	2,926	10,617
South Western	1,074	1,973	1,567	537	972	2,678	5,001	10,872	10,094
West Midlands	578	493	1,114	1,185	1,930	2,311	3,859	3,542	5,311
Mersey	264	549	713	1,577	1,464	1,087	2,377	4,109	6,923
North Western	338	334	1,414	600	999	1,979	2,515	8,396	4,075
BGs/SHAs	272	Nil	700	63	4,559	49	14,283	888	12,197
England	9,904	15,231	19,424	18,000	31,508	49,019	84,942	149,026	204,062

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the sales of National Health Service property and land by district health authorities area since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect routinely in the Department information of sales of NHS property and land by district health authorities.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list moneys payable to each district health authority from other health authorities for the provision of services for the mentally ill since June 1987.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we do not hold the information centrally.

Salmonella (Eggs)

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the results of the outbreaks of salmonella that have been confirmed by him as being attributable to eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Over 1,000 people suffered salmonella food poisoning in the 49 reported outbreaks of salmonellosis associated with the consumption of eggs.

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outbreaks of salmonella attributed by him to eggs could be attributed to the following factors *(a)* unhygienic food preparation in kitchens, *(b)* inadequate care in storage and transportation and *(c)* bad stockmanship on farms.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no evidence available which attributes outbreaks of salmonella from eggs to these factors.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the infection of turkeys, chickens and eggs with salmonella first came to the attention of his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Throughout the post-war years, reports on food poisoning and salmonella infection in England and Wales have indicated that poultry has been a significant source of this infection in humans.

District Health Authorities (Property)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the occasions since 1979 when consultation documents have been issued by district health authorities on properties in use by them which have been closed on a temporary basis by the district health authorities prior to the expiry date of consultation.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Health Authorities (Access to Information)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce legislation in line with that contained within the Health Authorities (Access to Information) Bill, introduced in the last Session of Parliament, at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Mellor: No.

National Health Service Premises

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all temporary closures of National Health Service premises by regional health authorities and district health authorities area since 1979, showing which facilities are currently open.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that the guidelines contained within HSC(IS)207 "Closure or Change of Use of Health Buildings" are adhered to.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities should be aware of the guidelines. Ministers are prepared to consider any instance where this does not seem to have happened.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate the difference between the categories of *(a)* temporary and *(b)* provisional when it is applied to closures of facilities or services within the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: The Community Health Council Regulations 1985, which prescribe procedures to be followed when a health authority wishes to substantially vary the services it provides, do not identify different categories of variations in services.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to increase the budgets of community health councils.

Mr. Mellor: Community health councils are funded by regional health authorities who make the relevant decisions.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider making extra funding available for the purpose of producing and distributing a regular national publication for community health councils, to be edited under their control.

Mr. Mellor: Such a publication exists. It is produced by the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales who are funded mainly by member community health councils and by a grant from this Department.

Radiation (Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received any requests from health authorities in the south-west for assistance in funding the compensation to be paid to patients who were damaged by excessive radiation during treatment at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Family Planning Clinics

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service family planning clinics have been closed in each of the last three years; by what amount staffing levels have changed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold information centrally in the form requested. National figures for the number of health authority family planning clinics and sessions provided in the last three years for which figures are available are set out in the table.

Family Planning Clinic Service—England
Community and hospital clinics[1]

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Premises regularly used for family planning sessions	1,768	1,746	1,756
Sessions (all types)[2]	197,127	196,075	195,700

[1]The table covers all clinic services including any provided by voluntary bodies or others on an agency basis.

[2]A session with two doctors has been included as two sessions. If

more than one nurse was present at a "nurse only" session it has been included as one session unless each nurse was advising a separate group.

Medical Records

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has from research conducted by his Department or by external researchers about the quality of medical records, and in particular about the extent to which hospitals notify general practitioners about the treatment their patients receive in hospital.

Mr. Mellor: We have no knowledge of recent studies directed specifically to this area.

Dalkon Shield Association

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet with representatives of the Dalkon Shield Association to discuss the problems that women who contaced them have encountered in obtaining information about their past medical treatment.

Mr. Mellor: If a request for a meeting is received we shall consider it. I refer, however, the right hon. Member to earlier replies on 28 November 1988 at column *139*, which give the basis of our response to inquiries. In particular, it is our long-standing advice to health authorties to be as helpful as possible to patients seeking this kind of information.

HIV

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about the infectivity of HIV in saliva in vitro.

Mr.Mellor: Expert advice is that there are a few studies in which HIV has been isolated from the saliva of a small miniroy of HIV seropositive patients studied. The presene of HIV in saliva from these individuals was demontrated by techniques involving in-vitro transmissior of the virus to mononuclear cells.

However, epidemiological studies show no evidence for the trasmission of HIV through saliva.

Lymphatic Cancer and Leukaemia

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the report from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment about the incidence of lymphatic cancer and leukaenia in young children living close to atomic weapons research establishment Aldermaston and atomic weapons research establishment Burghfield.

Mr.Mellor: Following the committee's meeting earlier this month, I expect their report to be finalised in the new year. COMARE's chairman has earlier offered to meet my hon. Fiend.

Smoking

Mr.Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations of the section in the fourth report of the Independent Scientic Committee on Smoking and Health relating to the heath hazards of passive smoking; and if he will make a statenent;

(2) if he will make a statement on the recommendations in the fourth report of the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health that every workplace with smoking and non-smoking employees should have a properly negotiated smoking police; and what steps he is taking to ensure that a workplace smoking policy is the norm rather than the exception.

Mr. Mellor: The report recommended:

"Consideration should be given to ways of ensuring that in the work and leisure environments, in public transport and in other public enclosed spaces smokers can be segregated from non-smokers".

The Government support the voluntary extension of smoke-free areas, including in the workplace. We have been actively encouraging Action on Smoking and Health in its development of a consultancy service to assist employers in the designing of workplace smoking policies. The Health and Safety Executive has recently published a free booklet entitled "Passive smoking at work" which suggests ways of reducing the exposure of non-smokers to tobacco smoke at work and answers some of the questions about the health risks of passive smoking.

The fourth report made a number of other recommendations on the subject of passive smoking. The Health Education Authority has publicised the risk of lung cancer associated with passive smoking. The role of environmental tobacco smoke in the occurrence of respiratory illness in children will be kept under review.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking on the recommendation of the chief medical officer that a clear commitment to a smoke-free environment for all Health Service staff and in all health premises should be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In May 1985, a circular was issued to NHS authorities offering general anti-smoking advice and asking them to draw up policy statements with a view to making non-smoking normal practice on Health Service premises and for Health Service staff.

Recent surveys have shown that, while a number of authorities have developed comprehensive policies, some still have scope for further progress. We are currently engaged in drafting a revised version of that circular which will draw upon the latest evidence of the damage to health done by passive smoking.

Lodgings and Unregistered Homes

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the survey on the provision of care in supported lodgings and unregistered homes conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Mellor: The results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys study of supported lodgings and residential homes are included in two reports. The first report on supported lodgings also includes some results on unregistered homes and was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in November. The second report, on residential homes and nursing homes, will include the remaining results on unregistered homes. That report is in preparation, and OPCS hopes to publish it in the summer of next year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources have been made available to the National

Children's Home during each of the past 10 years; and what funds he proposes to make available to the National Children's Home for the year 1989.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold the information centrally for the years before 1984-85. Grant aid approved for the National Children's Home for the financial years 1984-85 to 1989-90 is as follows:

Year	*Grants made under general scheme of S.64 grants (£,000)*	*Grants made under I.T. Initiative (£,000)*	*Grants made -Under 5s Initiative (£,000)*	*Total (£,000)*
1984-85	—	643·9	70·0	713·9
1985-86	—	779·8	47·5	827·3
1986-87	7·7	584·6	85·8	678·1
1987-88	19·5	275·0	—	294·5
1988-89	17·5	275·0	—	294·5
1989-90	8·8	—	—	8·8

In addition, the National Children's Home has applied for a grant of £84,000 over three years, starting in October 1989, to help meet the cost of manning a telephone counselling service in Leeds for survivors of sexual abuse. A decision on this application has yet to be taken.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether each district health authority has continuous and adequate supplies of the new measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that all orders from health authorities for MMR vaccine have been, and will continue to be, met in full by the manufacturers.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms Amnesty

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what powers he acted in offering the recent firearms amnesty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The amnesty had no statutory basis. It amounted to an agreement by chief officers of police, with the consent of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, not to bring criminal proceedings for unlawful possession against those who surrendered illegally held firearms to the police during the period of the amnesty.

Departmental Computer Systems

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the types of intrusion he is trying to prohibit in designing his departmental computer security systems;

(2) what steps are being taken to protect departmental computer systems against theft of data, malicious damage or illegal tampering with data;

(3) whether encryption techniques are being employed in his department security system;

(4) what plans he has to deal with the safety of back-up storage facilities for computer data in his departmental security systems;

(5) what plans he has to control access to information held in individual files in his departmental computer systems;

(6) whether his computer security system will restrict access to the originator of the data;

(7) what recovery procedures are available to a security supervisor of his departmental computer system when passwords are forgotten;

(8) if there is any system for monitoring terminal usage in his departmental computer system;

(9) what procedures exist to remove protection on particular files to make computer data available for general release;

(10) whether his departmental security system includes physical devices such as keys to protect computer data.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office has a large number of mainframe, mini and micro computer based systems in use. To safeguard them, there exists a wide range of measures designed to protect the data that they contain from all known threats, including unauthorised access and intrusion. Given the wide range of systems in use, it would not be practicable to list all the protective measures which support them; nor, for obvious reasons, would it be sensible to make such information public. All aspects of risk to computer systems are kept under review, and additional precautions are taken as and when necessary.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population in England and Wales on 1 December 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 2 December 1988, there were 49,235 persons in prison service establishments in England and Wales and 937 prisoners in police cells. The corresponding figures for 4 December 1987 were 48,697 and 793 respectively.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present weekly cost of keeping a person in prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the costs of running the prison service is published in the annual reports on its work, copies of which are in the Library. The report for 1987-88 (CM 516) shows that the average weekly cost of keeping a person in a penal establishment in England and Wales in that year was £275 (see Appendix 6, Table D).

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that only receive inmates on rule 43.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No prisons in England and Wales receive only inmates on rule 43.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison remand population in England and Wales on 1 December 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 October 1988, the latest date for which information is available, there were about 10,250 untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales. A further 1,531 prisoners, most of whom were on remand, were held in police cells. The corresponding figures on 31 October 1987 were 10,550 and 910 respectively.

Prisons (Strip Searches)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of strip searches made on women prisoners in prisons in England and Wales from 1 January to 30 November; and if he will list such searches at each prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of prison inmates who have been charged under prison rules of having unlawful drugs in their possession in each of the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of charges for possession of controlled drugs, dealt with by governors or boards of visitors in prison service establishments was about 1,540 in 1987 and 1,630 in 1986. Information for earlier years is not available.

Immigration

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of overseas applicants for settlement in the United Kingdom have been successful on the basis of DNA testing since he approved that system for use in immigration and visa cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I regret that this information is not available.

Prisoners (Transport)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many divisions use taxis to transport prisoners *(a)* to court and *(b)* to other prisons; and if he will give details of the numbers involved and a breakdown of the costs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the extent and cost of the use of taxis by prison establishments in England and Wales is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Taxis are used when circumstances—for example, short notice or urgency—prevent recourse to the normal movement arrangements which operate in the particular locality and which mostly involve contract coaches or minibuses.

Prison Nurses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will recognise the Royal College of Nursing to represent nurses who work in prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No approach has been made by the Royal College of Nursing to represent nurse grade staff working in prison service establishments. Should an approach be made it will be considered on its merits.

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities towards national security and the implications of such a scheme for his Department's use of the national insurance computer in Newcastle; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, (Mr. Darling), on 15 December 1988 at columns 1080-82.

Prescription Charges (Policemen)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to alter the arrangements under which policemen are able to reclaim National Health Service prescription charges.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This matter is under consideration by the police negotiating board. The staff side has rejected an official side proposal that police officers should be reimbursed NHS charges only when they arise from injury sustained on duty or from work-related illness and the board is now considering whether the issue should be referred to arbitration.

"Satanic Verses"

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Bolton requesting prosecution of the publishers of Salman Rushdie's book "Satanic Verses" for incitement to racial hatred.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has received no representations from residents of Bolton calling for the prosecution of the publishers of this book for the offence of incitement to racial hatred. He has, however, received several representations from hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East, (Mr. Thurnham) and numerous letters and petitions from members of the public and Muslim organisations, calling in more general terms for this book to be banned. My right hon. Friend has no power to ban any book. The law on incitement to racial hatred is contained in part III of the Public Order Act 1986. Prosecutions under this Act are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Drinking (Christmas)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, in the light of the outcome of Alcohol Awareness Week, what measures the Government have planned to discourage excessive drinking over the Christmas period, particularly in connection with driving.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for roads and traffic launched the latest phase of the Government's campaign against drinking and

driving on 5 December. In addition to widespread Government advertising in all sections of the media, the campaign draws together initiatives by local authorities, the police service and the private sector, including the brewing industry.

The ministerial group on alcohol misuse, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, is taking forward Government action on the wider aspects of alcohol misuse. Measures recently announced include joint departmental funding of the support costs for a pre-Christmas Radio 1 alcohol awareness initiative aimed at young people.

Police Operation (Acton)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the conduct and timing of the police operation in Old Oak Common lane, Acton, on 14 December; what liaison was carried out with the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the robbery in Old Oak Common lane occurred during a surveillance operation in which there was no opportunity either to influence the timing of events or to liaise in advance with the Post Office. It would not be right to comment further on the conduct of the operation as the case is now the subject of criminal proceedings.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take steps to upgrade the computer system in the missing persons bureau in New Scotland Yard.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for the Commission of Police of the Metropolis to determine whether the computer system currently used in the bureau should be upgraded. I understand that he has this under consideration, but it will have to be considered against other needs.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will take steps to ensure that persons whose names are on the register of missing persons in the missing persons bureau at New Scotland Yard are removed therefrom when they have been found;

(2) whether he will take steps to require the notification to the police national computer bureau and to the missing persons bureau at New Scotland Yard of persons known to be missing in the Metropolitan police district who are not themselves vulnerable, but whom the police have reason to believe may cause harm to others.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: These are operational matters for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. I understand however that when the missing persons bureau is notified that a person has been found their records are updated accordingly; and that the bureau contains information on persons missing in the Metropolitan police district who are believed to be a risk to others.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what crimes have allegedly been committed by persons who are both missing and wanted for alleged crimes, during the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take steps to require all police authorities to inform the police national computer bureau of every unidentified dead body found in their jurisdiction.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is a matter for individual chief officers of police. I understand however that chief officers do circulate details of unidentified bodies as necessary and may use the police national computer broadcast system for this purpose.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has considered the report of the Association of Chief Police Officers concerning the creation of a national register for missing persons;

(2) whether he will create a national register for missing persons as recommended by the report of the Association of Chief Police Officers; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how much he estimates it would cost to create a national register for missing persons as recommended by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Association of Chief Police Officers has set up a working party to review police procedures for dealing with inquiries relating to missing persons. We have not yet seen the report, which I understand has yet to be considered by the association's council. We will be happy to consider any recommendations which the association may put to us.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will require all chief officers of forces other than the Metropolitan police to provide him with statistics relating to missing persons, similar to those which he supplied to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West concerning the Metropolitan district, in his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *30-31*.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to his questions on 5 December at columns *30-31*.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will discuss methods whereby records in respect of missing and of wanted persons, respectively, may be made available where required by police trying to locate such persons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The decision on whether, and in what circumstances, information about missing and wanted persons should be circulated or otherwise made available is an operational matter for chief officers of police, who have established a working party to review police procedures for dealing with inquiries relating to missing persons.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consult the Salvation Army investigation department, so as to assist its efforts to reunite families where one of the spouses or parents has gone missing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no requests for assistance from the Salvation Army investigation department. We would of course be willing to consider any such requests.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has sought European Economic Community funding in order to comply with Council of Europe recommendation R(79)6, concerning the establishment of a national register of missing persons;

(2) what steps have been taken to comply with the Council of Europe recommendation R(79)6 during each of the years since that recommendation was made.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Recommendation No. R(79)6 of the Committee of Ministers concerns operational procedures which are a matter for chief officers of police.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the names, ages and last known whereabouts of all persons who have been missing in the Metropolitan police area for more than three months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It would not be right for my right hon. Friend to do so. I understand however that the police publish names and other details where it is appropriate to do so in the individual case, for instance where they have particular reason to believe that the person would be in danger.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the instructions concerning procedures for tracing missing persons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Responsibility for procedures for tracing missing persons rests with individual chief officers of police. It is for them to issue the necessary instructions within their force.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons are now wanted in connection with police inquiries in the Metropolitan police district and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, respectively, concerning alleged crimes; and what steps are taken to trace such persons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that on 15 October 1988, 26,093 persons in the Metropolitan police district were wanted in connection with police inquiries concerning alleged crimes. In the whole of the United Kingdom the number of persons wanted was 97,010, although this figure includes missing persons, aliens and people wanted for non-payment of fines who were all excluded from the Metropolitan figure. More detailed figures are not readily available.

Steps taken to trace such persons include the circulation of their details in the *Police Gazette*, which is sent to all forces. If any of these persons are known to be living in a particular area this is brought to the attention of local police officers during briefings.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will increase liaison with Interpol concerning persons missing in the United Kingdom and wanted in connection with criminal inquiries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The use of Interpol is an operational matter for the police. All forces are well aware of the facilities provided by Interpol to assist them in their inquiries.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquiries the Metropolitan police received from other forces in respect of missing persons during the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information is published in the report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis 1987, Cm. 389, a copy of which is in the Library.

Broadcasting

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will be responsible for setting the cost of transmission facilities for broadcasters on Channels 3 and 5.

Mr. Renton: The Government envisage that the UHF transmission system will move progressively into the private sector. The precise arrangements for setting transmission charges, both after privatisation and in the interim period before then, will depend on wider questions about the future of the transmission system on which the Government have yet to take a view. We will be consulting the BBC, the IBA and other interested parties about these matters.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what sanctions will be available to the Independent Television Commission in the event of the owner of a Channel 3 franchise failing to meet his target of 25 per cent. production by independent companies.

Mr. Renton: Paragraph 6.19 of the White Paper "Broadcasting in the 90s" proposes that the ITC should have power to issue a formal warning—a yellow card—and one year later to remove a licensee—a red card. The Government are considering whether, as an additional sanction, the ITC should be able to impose financial penalties.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Independent Television Commission will have the power to preview programmes to be broadcast on Channels 3, 4 and 5.

Mr. Renton: The ITC will not have the IBA's responsibility for detailed approval of scheduling or prior clearance of particular programmes, but the Government are considering further whether there are any circumstances in respect of which the ITC should have a reserve power to preview programmes.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to leave to the discretion of the Independent Television Commission the decision on when, in relation to the financial bids for franchising, to review assurances of programme quality.

Mr. Renton: Paragraph 6.17 of the White Paper "Broadcasting in the 90s" proposes that the ITC should operate a two-stage procedure. In the first stage applicants for licences would have to pass a quality threshold, including satisfying the ITC that they would meet consumer protection and positive programme requirements. In the second stage applicants who pass this quality threshold would be invited to offer financial tenders for the licence.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) further to his White Paper on

broadcasting, whether the Independent Television Commission will have the power to limit the number of minutes of advertising broadcast each hour on Channels 3, 4 and 5;

(2) whether the Independent Television Commission will have the power to limit the number of advertising breaks per broadcast on Channels 3, 4 and 5;

(3) further to his White Paper on broadcasting, whether the Independent Television Commission will have the powers to ensure that advertising is sold only at rates specified on the rate card;

(4) further to his White Paper on broadcasting, whether the Independent Television Commission will require commercial broadcasting companies to submit advertising rate cards for approval.

Mr. Renton: Paragraph 6.47 of the White Paper envisages that the ITC will have a duty to draw up and enforce a code on advertising, and that any maximum limits on advertising minutage should be subject to Government approval. The Government will consider the formulation of legislative provisions affecting advertising regulation in the light of comments on the White Paper, and of progress in finalising the detail of the Council of Europe convention on transfrontier broadcasting.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of viewers will be able to receive Channel 5;

(2) whether he will list the geographic areas in which viewers will need to instal new aerials to receive Channel 5.

Mr. Renton: Current assessments are that 65 to 70 per cent. of the population will be able to receive Channel 5. Most viewers will require a new or additional external aerial.

Irish Republican Army (Complaints)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has received complaining about remarks made by *(a)* the Irish Republican Army, *(b)* supporters of the Irish Republic Army and *(c)* apologists for the Irish Republican Army, in the past year.

Mr. Renton: Letters of complaint are not classified under these particular categories.

BBC Licence Fee

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has received in the past year complaining about the level of the BBC licence fee.

Mr. Renton: Since 1 January 1988 there have been 149 letters complaining about the level of the ordinary television licence fee.

Prison Disciplinary Code

Mr. Rees: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new prison disciplinary code will come into operation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We aim to lay revised rules on prison disciplinary matters, including a new code of offences, in January 1989. Our intention is that these should come into force on 1 April 1989.

Prisoners

Mr. Rees: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (i) life sentence prisoners and (ii) determinate sentence prisoners have been in prison for over 10 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Population[1] of prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1988 whose initial reception under sentence was 10 years or more earlier[2]

Type of sentence	*Number of prisoners*	
	All	*Recalled[3]*
Life sentence	665	85
Determinate sentence	29	5

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

[2] Includes time spent on licence by prisoners recalled after having been released on licence.

[3] Prisoners who had been recalled after having been released on licence.

Prisoners (Complaints)

Mr. Rees: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many complaints from prisoners were received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration between 1967 and 1987; and how many of these were investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no information about complaints received by the Commissioner but records in the Department suggest that over this period he investigated some 150 complaints from prisoners.

Prison Building

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average current cost per place of prison building.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Seven new prisons are under construction, with others at varying stages of design and planning. These seven new prisons will provide some 4,042 new places at a total estimated cost, including resource and development costs, of £353·5 million at current prices. This produces an overall average cost per place of approximately £87,500. The actual costs vary according to the size, design, location, use of the prison and facilities which need to be included in a normal community, for example, workshops, hospitals and gymnasia.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 December 1988

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he is making in the Government's investigations into the export to South Africa via West Germany of multi-sensor platforms containing components supplied by British Aerospace; and when he expects them to be completed.

Mrs. Chalker: As I said in my answer of 29 November, at column *185*, inquiries are continuing. I hope to be in a position soon to give the right hon. Gentleman a substantive answer.

Palestine

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Israel about the closure of academic institutions in occupied Palestine for over one year, in particular the universities of Bir-Zeit, Al-Najah, Bethlehem and the Islamic university of Gaza; and whether he will meet representatives of these institutions.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made repeated representations to the Israelis about the closure of universities, most recently with our European partners on 23 September. Her Majesty's consul-general in Jerusalem maintains contact with representatives of these institutions.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to meet senior figures within the Palestine Liberation Organisation in order to advance the peace process in the light of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's explicit acceptance of the state of Israel; and whether he will invite the Palestine Liberation Organisation's leader, Chairman Arafat, to London for talks.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to do so.

Immigration (Interviews)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present waiting times to first interview for all categories of applicant in each country in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Eggar: Settlement queues are organised as follows:

Q1 Persons with a claim to the right of abode; dependent relatives over 70 years; special compassionate cases.
Q2 All spouses; all children under 18 years.
Q3 Fiance(e)s and other first time applicants for settlement.
Q4 Re-applicants.

As at 31 October 1988 the waiting times for first interview at posts in the Indian sub-continent were:

Queue	*Waiting times (months)* actual	estimated
New Delhi		
1	0	0
2	4	3
3	6·5	5
4	11	9
Bombay		
1	2	2
2	6	6
3	9	9
4	10	10
Dhaka		
1	3	3
2	7	7
3	7	7
4	23	23
Islamabad		
1	4	3·5
2	11	12
3	20	18
4	20	29
Karachi		
1	2	1
2	5	3
3	10	7
4	13	13

Note: There are no waiting times at Calcutta or Madras.

Actual waiting time is the time an applicant interviewed at the end of October had waited. Estimated time is the time an applicant applying at the end of October can expect to wait for interview.

Immigration (Procedures)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying for entry clearance on 31 March or the latest convenient date at each post in the Indian subcontinent could expect to wait, in each queue, for *(a)* first interview, *(b)* referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, *(c)* decision after first interview, and *(d)* the explanatory statement prepared by the post in the case of appeal against any refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: *(a)* The waiting times as at 31 October were given in another reply to the hon. Member today.

(b) and *(c)* This information is not available. Processing times vary considerably from case to case.

(d) Average despatch times of explanatory statements from receipt of the appeal are:

Post	*Settlement*	*Non-settlement*
New Delhi	10-12 weeks	8-10 weeks
Bombay	5½ months	4½ months
Calcutta	6 weeks	6 weeks
Madras	4 weeks	4 weeks
Islamabad	5 months	2-3 months
Karachi	1 month	1 month

The information for Dhaka is not yet available. I will write to the hon. Member when it is received.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying

for entry clearance for settlement at the British post in *(a)* Manila, *(b)* Accra, *(c)* Lagos, *(d)* Kingston, *(e)* Nicosia and *(f)* Cairo on 31 March or the latest convenient date could expect to wait for (i) interview, (ii) referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, (iii) decisions and (iv) an explanatory statement prepared by the post in the event of an appeal against a refusal to be dispatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The information sought at (ii) and (iii) is not available. Processing times vary from case to case.

As to (i) and (iv) the position as at 16 December was as follows:

	(i)	*(iv)*
Manila	10 weeks	within one month
Accra	Normally same day	[1]—
Lagos	Normally same day	[1]—
Kingston	Normally same day	[1]—
Nicosia	Either immediately or within one week	none pending
Cairo	same day	maximum three weeks

[1] This information is not yet available. I will write to the hon. Member when it is received.

Trident

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with *(a)* the Soviet and *(b)* the United States' authorities concerning the provisions for verifying the numbers and locations of that part of the pooled United States Navy, Royal Navy inventory of Trident missiles which is held in Royal Navy custody, as part of a proposed United States-Soviet agreement to reduce strategic weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United States-Soviet START negotiations cover United States and Soviet strategic weapons only. The details of the verification provisions have yet to be agreed. We maintained regular contacts with both the United States and Soviet Governments on START as well as on other arms control issues. Our exchanges with the United States are particularly close and regular.

Cuba

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current state of Anglo-Cuban relations.

Mr. Eggar: We have normal diplomatic relations with Cuba.

THE ARTS

Buildings (Access)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he can now respond to the Carnegie council's proposal for an independently managed trust fund for the adaptation of arts buildings to make them more accessible to disabled people.

Mr. Luce: I have been impressed by the case made in the Attenborough report and by the Carnegie council for help towards improved access to arts venues for disabled people. I am therefore proposing to make a special contribution of £150,000 towards a fund for this purpose which is to be set up by the Carnegie (United Kingdom) trust. Carnegie has already announced that it is prepared to put in £250,000 subject to matching contributions from business and other sources. The details of the new arrangements will be announced by Carnegie in the new year. I very much welcome a proposal of this kind to improve access to the arts for disabled people.

I am also delighted to acknowledge the Carnegie council's support for the Museums and Galleries Commission towards the appointment of a disablement officer.

PRIME MINISTER

Bradford

Q81. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to visit Bradford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Dartford

Q87. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Dartford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Thank-you Letters

Q139. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy on behalf of the Government of the day to send to citizens of the United Kingdom who do good work and good works over many years a simple letter of thanks and recognition of service.

The Prime Minister: Ministers already write to a large number of people whose work has been drawn to their attention. We gladly pay tribute to the great value of their service.

United States of America

Q162. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Prime Minister what has been the total cost of her official visits to the United States of America since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of my official visits to the United States of America since May 1979 is £323,345. (Includes the estimated cost of my visit to the United States of America in November 1988. It excludes the costs of visits to the United States of America which formed part of a more extensive itinerary. These are not readily identifiable.)

Eggs

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister which Department's vote will carry the cost of the advertisements headed "Eggs: The Facts" inserted by Her Majesty's Government; and whether a supplementary estimate will be placed before Parliament to cover it.

The Prime Minister: The cost of advertising will be met jointly by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It will be the subject of supplementary estimates.

Foreign Visits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *267*, what she considers a reasonable length of time to keep open accounts relating to her visits overseas; and how many accounts remain open after *(a)* one year, *(b)* two years and *(c)* more than two years.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my answer of 8 December at column *267*.

Engagements

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Grants (Manufacturing Companies)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will ask list the grants available from his Department and the criteria by which they are awarded for manufacturing companies resident in Nottingham.

Mr. Atkins: *Consultancy initiative*. Independent firms or groups with a payroll of fewer than 500, can benefit from the enterprise initiative which offers financial support for between five and 15 man-days' specialist consultancy in a number of key management functions such as marketing, design, quality, manufacturing systems, business planning and financial and information systems. In the Nottingham urban programme area DTI will pay two-thirds of the cost of the consultancy projects, whereas outside that area the Department will pay half.

Assistance for exceptional projects. Each year a handful of projects (nationally) benefit from this scheme which is available on a selective basis towards investment of research and development projects with eligible costs of at least £500,000 and which are viable and would not go ahead in the United Kingdom without assistance. Such projects must be likely to lead to exceptional national benefits. Grants of up to half the agreed costs can be made available to firms for collaborative research programmes conducted jointly by more than one organisation such as industrial and commercial firms, universities and polytechnics, research and technology organisations and Government research laboratories.

All firms in Nottingham are also eligible for assistance under the various export services some of which can provide financial assistance.

Satellite Dishes

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider the abolition of the licence currently required on the purchase of television satellite dish signal receiving units.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is currently reviewing the licensing requirements under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 for virtually all receive-only apparatus, including reception equipment for television broadcasts direct to the home from fixed-service satellites (TVRO equipment). This review will not however affect the licence required for domestic television sets. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry expects to make a statement shortly.

Drink-driving

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in discussions with the insurance industry about the ending of insurance policies against the consequences of disqualification for drink-driving offences.

Mr. Maude: The Association of British Insurers has offered on behalf of members and non-members of the association an agreement whereby the insurers at present writing these policies will cease to offer new contracts after 31 December 1988. The agreement will extend to all policies which cover the policyholder for the consequences of disqualification from driving for alcohol or drug related offences. Existing policies will be phased out after 31 December 1990.

The Government welcome this offer, and have accepted it. The Government will, however, be prepared to introduce legislation on this subject if for any reason the agreement is not successful in bringing the issue of these policies to an end.

Rechargeable Batteries

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives he plans to take domestically or at European Community level, to encourage the use of rechargeable batteries.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I have no plans for initiatives to encourage the use of rechargeable batteries.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of expenditure by the north Peckham task force, occurring outside its defined boundary, in terms of both the amount of expenditure, and the project funded.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* It is not possible to provide this information in the form requested.

All projects supported by the north Peckham task force are designed to benefit directly or indirectly the inhabitants of the north Peckham task force area. However, many projects result in some expenditure being made outside the task force area because of the need to provide services, equipment or materials which are not available from within the area.

Multipoint Video Distribution System

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at what frequency the multipoint video distribution system will operate.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* As our recent White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" makes clear, the Government have not reached a decision on which frequency band or bands should be made available for the local delivery of programme services by multipoint video distribution systems (MVDS). The White Paper sets out some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages attaching to various possible bands, and invites comments on this and other aspects by February 1989. The Government are committed to making their intentions clear by, at the latest, the end of April 1989.

Foreign Shareholdings

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column 139, there has been any conclusion to the discussions between his Department and the EEC Commissioner on the compatibility of the 15 per cent. limit on foreign shareholdings with the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* No. Discussions with the European Commission are continuing.

Caravans (Smoke Detectors)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in fitting smoke detectors to new caravans as foreshadowed in the statement made by the Under-Secretary of State on 29 June.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I have been informed that the technical committee of the National Caravan Council has established a specification for a smoke detector suitable for operation in the restricted environment of a caravan, and that the manufacturer members, trade members and para members of the council have accepted the undertaking that all new and used caravans sold after 1 May 1989 will be fitted with smoke detectors. This is welcome confirmation of the statement of intent which my predecessor reported to the House on 29 June, and I am happy that the caravan industry is making this important contribution to safety.

Copra

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if copra exports from Christmas Island have been monitored for radioactivity; to which countries copra has been exported; and how such consignments have been checked for contamination.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Exports of copra from Christmas Island have not been monitored for radioactivity by the British Government. Extensive environmental monitoring showed that no indigenous products were likely to have been affected to any significant extent by surface radioactivity.

TRANSPORT

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December at columns *1080-82*.

Network SouthEast

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of British Rail, Network SouthEast; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I frequently meet representatives of British Rail's Network SouthEast and discuss a very wide range of issues.

A46-A47 Link Road

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to visit Leicester to see the route of the proposed A46-A47 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The A46-A47 link road is a local authority scheme which is the responsibility of Leicestershire county council as highway authority.

A1 (Lamberton Toll)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to redevelop the A1 trunk route at Lamberton toll on the English-Scottish border; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's northern regional office has a number of options under consideration for the improvement of the A1 trunk road near to the English-Scottish border. It is possible that the preferred scheme may extend into Scotland. There are discussions with the Scottish Development Department and further meetings are planned. On current planning a preferred scheme should be announced by early summer 1989.

Announcements (Underground)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for passenger safety on the London underground of unintelligible or inaudible announcements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The statutory responsibility for underground safety rests with London Regional Transport. However, I understand that it has accepted and is pursuing recommendation 110 of the Fennell report that the quality and scope of public address equipment should be improved and cover a wider area of stations.

Ports

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is being taken by Her Majesty's Government in the period leading up to 1992 to ensure that Britain's ports can compete on a fair and equal basis with their European rivals.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 6 December at columns 97-8.

Newcastle Airport

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which cities on the continent in European Economic Community countries are served by direct air services from Newcastle; and what was the level of provision when Britain joined the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are currently direct air services from Newcastle to three cities within the EEC—Amsterdam, Dublin and Paris. When Britain joined the EEC, there were direct services to Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Dublin.

Hunting (Rail Hazards)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the safety implications of recent incidents of hunts trespassing on to railway lines.

Mr. Portillo: I am advised that the presence of foxhounds on railway track is most unlikely to involve any danger to trains or their passengers. It is for huntsmen to ensure that horses do not stray onto railways and to exercise control over hounds.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list incidents reported by British Rail under accident reporting procedures of trains *(a)* delayed or *(b)* forced to halt as a result of hunts trespassing on to railway lines over the last two years.

Mr. Portillo: There have been no such incidents reported to my Department by British Rail under the statutory reporting procedures.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many hounds participating in hunts have been killed by trains while crossing railway lines during hunts over the last two years.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member should approach the British Railways board for these details.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from *(a)* the New Forest Foxhounds, *(b)* the Bicester and Whaddon Chase Foxhounds and *(c)* the Cattistock Foxhounds regarding the killing of hounds by British Rail trains; what compensation is payable in such cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received no such representations. The question of compensation payable to persons involved in rail incidents is a matter for the railways board.

M1 (Safety)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents were reported on the stretch of four lane motorway on the south bound carriageway of the M1 north of junction four for the periods when the road markings were showing the additional lane as an offside lane for fast moving vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the road surface markings and signs relating thereto on the southbound carriageway of the M1 north of junction 4 on the stretch of four-lane motorway were *(a)* initially altered to show the use of an additional offside lane for fast moving vehicles and *(b)* altered again to show instead the use of an additional nearside lane for slow moving vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The initial signing arrangement was based on signing of diverge lanes for faster traffic elsewhere. It was not successful on this stretch of the M1. It has therefore been changed.

Railways (Safety)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve safety on the railways.

Mr. Portillo: I am obviously concerned that safety on the railways should be of the highest order. The law places upon the British Railways Board and the operators of other statutory railway undertakings an obligation to run their services safely. The railway inspectorate, which advises Ministers on railway safety matters, keeps closely in touch with the railway operators on all aspects of safety. In the light of the Fennell report, the railway inspectorate is considering whether it can improve the way in which this is done.

London Underground (Crime)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the recommendations in the 1986 report, "Crime on the London Underground", have been implemented.

Mr. Portillo: All the recommendations for action by London Underground Limited are being implemented, some on an experimental basis in pilot projects. The recommendations concerning the organisation of the British transport police are for the Police Committee.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received a costed programme from London Regional Transport of the measures recommended in the report, "Crime on the London Underground".

Mr. Portillo: My Department receives regular reports from London Underground Limited on expenditure

committed and planned from the £15 million that the Government have made available for the implementation of the measures recommended in the report.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the Civil Aviation Authority's advice on strategies for making good use of the air traffic control capacity in the period up to 1995.

Mr. Channon: I received the advice at the end of November. The authority is publishing it today and copies are being placed in the Library.

I welcome the advice, which contains a clear statement of the steps that the national air traffic services are taking to improve the provision of air traffic control services pending the significant increase in capacity which will result from the reorganisation of the London terminal area airspace due to be completed in 1995. The advice also explains the important initiatives that the United Kingdom has been taking internationally to increase co-operation and co-ordination between air traffic control authorities in Europe.

The Government's public expenditure plans announced in the autumn, already make provision for a two thirds increase in the authority's investment next year. The Government will continue to approve individual projects within the authority's investment programme where they are financially justified, as in the past. The Government also fully support the authority in introducing flexible working practices and in increasing recruitment of air traffic controllers to handle growing traffic levels.

I look to the chairman of the authority to pursue the strategy vigorously. I have asked him to consider any new ideas that may be put to him and to take further steps to relieve air traffic control congestion where these prove practicable.

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has yet updated its 1986 air traffic forecasts; and if he will make a statement about airport capacity in the south-east.

Mr. Channon: My Department is today publishing fresh forecasts of passenger demand at United Kingdom airports. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the House Libraries.

The latest forecasts cover the period to 2005. For United Kingdom airports they predict higher volumes of traffic than those estimated in 1986, with a significant increase in the proportion of passengers using regional airports, whose share is projected to rise from 33 per cent. to over 37 per cent. Continuing strong growth is expected both at London and at regional airports, relying on the availability of sufficient air traffic control capacity. This reflects among other factors the sustained economic performance of this country and our strength in business and tourism. The new forecasts take account on the one hand of lower air fares which are expected to result from further liberalisation; and on the other of the effects of the Channel tunnel.

In the 1985 White Paper "Airports Policy" (Cmnd 9542) the Government stated that one of the objectives towards which United Kingdom airports policy should be directed was the fostering of a strong and competitive British airline industry through the provision of enough airport capacity where it is needed. In respect of the London airports the White Paper concluded that the developments then in hand or planned should provide both sufficient capacity to meet air transport demand in the south-east into the mid 1990s, and the necessary flexibility to enable decisions to be taken at the appropriate time for any development needed thereafter. On regional airports my predecessors and I have consistently affirmed our encouragement for their maximum use and development to meet demand arising locally, and have said we look to them to attract more traffic and so help with the pressure on the south-east.

The Government's commitment has most recently been evidenced by my announcement yesterday of capital expenditure allocations for municipal airports and public airport companies for 1989-90 totalling £23 million. These include an allocation towards the cost of the first phase of a major new passenger terminal at Manchester airport, thus allowing the airport company to proceed.

Earlier this year I judged that the time had come to review the strategy set out in the White Paper in the light of subsequent events. I therefore asked the Civil Aviation Authority for formal recommendations, under section 16(2) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, on the United Kingdom airport capacity needed to cope with demand through to 2005. At the same time, I asked the authority for interim advice on strategies for making good use of the available air traffic control capacity until the planned reorganisation of the London terminal area (LTMA) airspace produces additional capacity in 1995. I received the authority's interim advice at the end of last month and it is being published by the authority today. The authority's main advice is due in July of next year and I shall neither take nor endorse any decisions on airport capacity until I have considered that advice.

The present outlook is as follows. Although Heathrow and Gatwick are now operating for much of the time at close to the capacity of their runways, their passenger throughput can be expected to go on increasing gradually over the years with the growth in size of aircraft and with some further peak-spreading. Moreover, the London area still has substantial spare runway capacity at Stansted. The runway there is at present handling only about 1 million passengers per annum, though its potential capacity is of the order of 25 million passengers per annum. Runways at Luton and London City airports and at other existing airports accessible to passengers to and from the south-east can also be expected to make some contribution to the handling of London's traffic growth. But of course runway capacity cannot be realised without improvements in airspace capacity over south-eastern England, and the corresponding development of sufficient passenger terminal capacity.

In its interim advice on airspace strategies, the CAA explains that in 1995, with the completion of the planned reorganisation of London terminal area airspace, it expects LTMA air traffic control capacity to be adequate to handle the runway capacities of Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, in addition to 16 movements per hour at Luton.

As to terminal capacity, a number of new developments are either planned or possible. The first phase of Stansted's new terminal is already under construction and is planned to open in 1991. Outline planning permission has been given for completion of the terminal to a capacity of 15 million passengers per annum, though parliamentary approval would be needed to raise the current limit on air

transport movements at the airport. Moreover, as envisaged in the 1985 White Paper, further terminal development to the capacity of Stansted's runway would also be possible, subject to planning permission and to Parliament's decision over the airport's current air transport movement limit. The White Paper also left open the possibility of a fifth passenger terminal at Heathrow; again, any proposal would be subject to planning permission.

There are therefore a number of ways in which airport capacity in the south-east can continue to meet demand, without the commissioning of new runways. I now await the CAA's main advice, due in July. Meanwhile, in view of the long lead-times necessary for seeking planning approval and for construction, it is right that those responsible for operating and developing airports should review the options for any new terminal developments that traffic forecasts indicate are likely to be needed.

London Regional Transport (Finance)

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the external financing limit for London Regional Transport.

Mr. Portillo: The external financing limit for London Regional Transport for the current financial year has been increased by £54 million to £275 million to allow for additional safety-related expenditure following the fire at King's Cross and the purchase of Victoria coach station from the National Bus Company. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Travellers Fare

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his proposals for the future arrangements in respect of Travellers Fare.

Mr. Portillo: I am pleased to announce that, following a recommendation from the British Railways Board, the Secretary of State has given his consent under section 1 of the Transport Act 1981 to the board's sale of Travellers Fare Limited, its station catering subsidiary, to a new company formed by the Travellers Fare management.

The board's choice of the Travellers Fare management as the new owners follows a competitive tender exercise. The management will be setting up an employee share ownership plan in the new year. I wish the management and staff of Travellers Fare success in the private sector.

Road Development

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy on the control of development on motorways and other trunk roads in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Department of Transport Circular 4/88 and Welsh Office Circular 42/88 set out the general policy which will guide the Departments in exercising their powers of direction under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988, and in advising local planning authorities on the implications of development proposals for trunk roads.

Trunk roads are designed primarily to further the safe and free flow of long distance through traffic. This necessitates limiting the numbers of junctions and accesses. No direct accesses to motorways are allowed other than for service area and related facilities.

In the case of other trunk roads, development of suitable sites to provide services for motorists is to be encouraged in areas where the necessary services are lacking, and it will not be appropriate to exercise the same severity of restriction on some of the older trunk roads as in relation to the newer high standard ones.

In all cases the implications of development for traffic on the trunk road should be taken into account in decisions on planning applications. This also applies to development at or near to junctions with trunk roads.

It is important to take into account the extent to which traffic generated by development may use up in whole or part the residual capacity of trunk roads or junctions with them. That aspect is of particular concern in relation to the more heavily used roads such as M25.

In cases where the developer considers that the traffic implications of development can be made acceptable by works which he is willing to fund, he is recommended to seek an early meeting with the Department concerned to explore the scope for an agreement under section 278 of the Highways Act 1980. Agreements cannot be used to cover departures from the general ban on accesses to motorways, or for multiplying access points on other trunk roads contrary to the policy in the circular.

They may be appropriate in circumstances where new or modified access arrangements to departmental standards would be acceptable from a road safety and traffic management standpoint, and the developer is willing to pay in whole or part for these and other improvements to deal with traffic generated by the development. Where such improvements are in prospect, it may be appropriate to impose a condition on the planning permission delaying implementation of the development until they are effective.

We shall shortly issue a guidance notice on section 278 agreements.

Transport Police

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the independent inspection of the British Transport police by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 19 December at columns *9-10*.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current complement of British Transport police officers; and how many are on duty on average each day within the London Underground system.

Mr. Portillo: The current national complement of the British Transport police is 1,918. The complement of the division responsible for the London underground is 350. On an average day 162 of the division's officers are deployed, on a three shift basis, on the underground network.

Bus Licensing

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals are being advanced by the

European Commission to the Council of Ministers on the procedure for licensing bus services within the Community after 1992; and what is his assessment of the effect of these proposals on United Kingdom bus operators with services to the continent.

Mr. Portillo: The Commission has submitted proposals to liberalise and simplify some of the rules governing international bus and coach services in the Community, and to permit road passenger transport cabotage. The proposals have still to be agreed, and envisage a more far-reaching proposal by 1990. United Kingdom coach operators would be subject to more intensive competition in certain areas and would benefit from the increased opportunities which deregulation would bring.

London Underground (Security)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of recent murders and attacks on London Underground, he will give details of any proposals to improve security on public transport in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* London Regional Transport has accepted the recommendation of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary that the complement of the London underground division of the British Transport police should be increased from 350 to 400 officers. LRT will be discussing the implementation of this recommendation with the British Transport police committee and the Chief Constable with the objective of bringing the division up to the new complement by the end of the 1989-90 financial year. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the Commissioner of the City of London Police will be consulted as to how best they, in conjunction with the British Transport police, could provide additional officers as quickly as possible for policing the underground while the new British Transport police officers are being recruited and trained.

The increased manpower will facilitate further extension of the local area policing concept successfully piloted in the Stockwell area and will increase the police presence on the underground generally. London Underground Limited is implementing the recommendations of the Department of Transport's report of November 1986 on "Crime on the Underground" through a programme of passenger security measures for which the Government have made £15 million available. As part of this programme it has today commissioned a new underground communications network which will enable the use of police radio at 42 deep-level stations. The passenger security programme also includes installation at a number of stations of "Help Point" booths, intercom/alarm panels, enhanced closed circuit television monitoring and improved lighting.

SCOTLAND

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department gave on 15 December in response to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) about this matter. My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) for its views on the introduction of national identity cards and the association's response is awaited.

Community Charge

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce regulations to restrict the copying of an extract of the community charge register when a copy is taken for a purpose wholly unconnected with the community charge.

Mr. Lang: No.

Transplant Surgery

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* heart, *(b)* cornea, *(c)* liver, *(d)* pancreas, *(e)* kidney and *(f)* lung transplants were carried out in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Only corneal and kidney transplants are carried out in Scotland. Scottish figures for these are as follows:

	Corneal	*Kidney*
1977	98	67
1978	95	81
1979	75	59
1980	96	90
1981	106	70
1982	106	104
1983	116	132
1984	129	149
1985	167	126
1986	142	125
1987	100	116

Anti-smoking Campaigns

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what expenditure his Department made on anti-smoking campaigns, other than grants to ASH and the Scottish Health Education Group, in the current financial year; and what are planned in 1989-90;

(2) what is the total expenditure by the Scottish Health Education Group on anti-smoking campaigns in the current financial year;

(3) what expenditure he intends to make on anti-smoking campaigns in 1989-90;

(4) what grant his Department made to Action on Smoking and Health in the current financial year ; and what it will be in 1989-90;

(5) what proportion of the Scottish Health Education Group's budget is spent on anti-smoking campaigns in the current financial year; and proportion he expects to spend in 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Health Education Group has allocated the sum of £247,000 for anti-smoking measures during the current financial year. This allocation represents 9 per cent. of the group's total publicity budget. The Scottish Committee for Action on Smoking and

Health will receive an annual grant-in-aid from the Scottish Home and Health Department of £34,000 in the current financial year. Specific allocations concerning National Health Service expenditure in Scotland for 1989-90 have not yet been finalised. No other anti-smoking campaigns are being funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department at present.

Scottish Health Education Group

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to appoint a fund raiser to the Scottish Health Education Group to encourage an increase in the group's income from non-governmental sources.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Health Education Group is considering how any additional funds which non-Governmen sources might be willing to contribute could be directed into health education. I will ask the group to let me have views on my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Timber

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his estimates of the expected annual growth in timber production assuming present forestry policies are maintained until the year 2000.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Current annual timber production in Great Britain is 6·1 million cu. m. This is expected to rise to about 9 million cu. m. by the year 2000.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his estimates of the expected annual growth in the apparent consumption of timber and timber derivatives until the year 2000.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The FAO's European timber trends study, published in 1986, forecasts an annual growth in the apparent consumption of timber and timber derivatives in the United Kingdom from now until the year 200 of about 2 per cent.

M77

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the opposition expressed to the proposed M77 extention, he will halt its construction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A public local inquiry into objections to the A77 Ayr road route proposals was held in Glasgow earlier this year. The reporter has recently submitted part I of his report and I expect the full report to be completed early next year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will decide whether or not the road improvement should go ahead when he has considered the full report.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the average number of people resident in Scotland per National Health Service hospital bed for the years 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The ratio of people to beds is set out below on the basis of the registrar general's mid-year estimates of population and the average number of available staffed beds in the years ending 31 March.

	Number
1978	87·9
1979	88·1
1980	88·6
1981	88·6
1982	89·4
1983	90·5
1984	89·8
1985	90·6
1986	91·8
1987	92·5
1988	93·8

Hazardous Waste

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and addresses of all the sites in Scotland which are approved for the disposal and dumping of hazardous and toxic wastes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton Twenty-two landfill waste disposal sites authorised to accept significant quantities of hazardous and toxic wastes are listed in the table. Other sites may be authorised by the 56 Scottish waste disposal authorities, the district and islands councils, to accept hazardous and toxic wastes but under conditions which limit their significance.

Address of landfill waste disposal site	*Waste disposal authority*
Central region	
Kinneill Kerse tip, Bo'ness, Foreshore, Bo'ness	Falkirk District Council
West Carron, Carron road, Falkirk	Falkirk District Council
Lower Polmaise, Fallin, Stirling	Stirling District Council
Fife region	
East Forthar Farm, Kingskettle, Ladybank	North East Fife District Council
Grampian region	
Little Clinterty, Clinterty, Aberdeen	City of Aberdeen District Council
Blackdog Farm (north), Bridge of Don	Gordon District Council
Highland region	
Council site, Brackletter, Spean Bridge	Lochaber District Council
Lothian region	
Levenseat Landfill Ltd, Levenseat quarry, Fauldhouse	West Lothian District Council

Address of landfill waste disposal site	*Waste disposal authority*
Strathclyde region	
Stevenston Works tip, Stevenston	Cunninghame District Council
Greenoakhill tip, Hamilton road, Broomhouse, Glasgow	City of Glasgow District Council
Craignaught quarry, Dunlop	Kilmarnock and Loudoun District Council
Lanarkshire lagoons, Ravenscraig works, Motherwell	Motherwell District Council
Coke ovens area, Ravenscraig works, Motherwell	Motherwell District Council
Tweeniehills quarry, Kilbarchan	Renfrew District Council
Birdston, Kirkintilloch	Strathkelvin District Council
Inchbelly, Kirkintilloch	Strathkelvin District Council
Tayside region	
Lochead farm landfill site, Forfar	Angus District Council
Leysmill quarry, Leysmill, Arbroath	Angus District Council
Leoch and Fallows quarries, Rosemill, Dundee	City of Dundee District Council
Wellbank quarry, Wellbank, Dundee	City of Dundee District Council
Luncarty Bleachfield, Luncarty, Perth	Perth and Kinross District Council
Shetland Islands	
Sullom Voe terminal, Calback Ness, Shetland	Shetland Islands Council

Young Offenders (Training)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has carried out any evaluation of the SACRO Strathclyde ESF training scheme for young offenders; if he will consider funding similar schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The funding for this scheme was arranged by Strathclyde regional council and it does not therefore fall to my right hon. and learned Friend to carry out any evaluation. He would, of course, be interested to see the outome of any evaluation carried out by the regional council.

Motorway Crash Barriers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to complete the installation of central crash barriers on every motorway in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At present there are 145 miles of motorway in Scotland, of which 41 miles have central barriers. The existing motorway network has been constructed by successive Governments since the mid-1960s, some sections with central barriers, others without. It is our policy to provide central barriers on all new and existing motorways and this will be done as quickly as available resources permit.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1988 reported by the national museums and galleries in Scotland, broken down into the individual institutions, including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage change on the attendance figures for 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Attendance figures for the calendar year 1988 are not yet available.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of those companies which have received regional development grants of under £25,000 in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Information about the payments over £25,000 is published in *British Business*, but is not collated for payments below that figure because of disporportionate cost.

Fish Farming

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he can now give any information as to the results of research carried out by his Department's marine laboratory concerning the incidence of plankton blooms on the west coast and their effect upon fish farming operations; what steps he proposes to take in response to their conclusions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Findings of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory analysis of algal blooms which occurred this year are to be published next year. I will send a copy to the hon. Member in due course.

Longer-term research by the marine laboratory into the causes and spread of algal bloom in waters of the west coast of Scotland and in Shetland will take several years to complete.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library the latest figures on hospital waiting lists by area and speciality in Scotland in the manner set out in the information deposited in response to the question from the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) *Official Report*, column *810*, on 21 July.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information on hospital waiting lists in the form requested is published in table 2 in the Statistical Bulletin 1/88, "Waiting List Figures for 31 March 1988", copies of which are held in the Library.

Adult Education

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has reached a conclusion on the funding of an adult basic education project in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have agreed the suggestion of the Scottish Community Education Council that I provide

"learning shop" in Whitfield, Dundee. I hope that this initiative will provide valuable lessons for adult basic education in Scotland.

Prisons Inspectorate

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received from Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons for Scotland his annual report for 1987.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received Her Majesty's inspector of prisons for Scotland's annual report for 1987. I have today placed copies of the report in the Library, and I am sending a copy to the chairman of the Scottish parliamentary all-party penal affairs group and to other interested bodies. Copies may also be purchased from my Department.

Farming (Subsidies)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the level of subsidies received by West German farmers from their national Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The information is contained in the annal agriculture report prepared by the federal Government. The 1988 edition was published in February of this year.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how many employment has declined in the tobacco manufacturing industry in Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The information requested is not available for publication as this would disclose information about individual companies.

Electricity

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to secure publication of the methods of calculation used by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board to establish the tariffs charged for the purchase of privately generated electricity under section 10(1) of the Electricity Act 1983.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The calculation of tariffs is a matter for the board and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take to deal with lack of capacity in Welsh medium schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There remains in Wales considerable surplus capacity in schools resulting from falling numbers of pupils. Where there is insufficient capacity in existing Welsh-medium schools to meet parental demands for Welsh-medium education, I would encourage local education authorities to take steps to reorganise their provision so as to meet the demand. It is for LEAs to initiate proposals for such schemes. Gross provision for local authority capital expenditure on education was increased by 42 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1988-89. Next year provision will be increased by a further 11 per cent. to £52·9 million. One of the main objectives of these increases has been to encourage rationalisation.

Rural Development Commission

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to establish in Wales a commission which has the same powers in rural areas as the Rural Development Commission in England.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No.

Eggs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to compensate those egg producers in Wales who have suffered a significant reduction in sales as a result of allegations of salmonella infection.

Mr. Peter Walker: My right hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, announced to the House on Monday 19 December 1988 the terms of an £18 million compensation scheme for the egg industry. The scheme comprises two measures. The first will provide a payment to egg packers for the destruction of surplus eggs for a period of four weeks from 21 December. The second measure will enable up to 4 million hens to be culled to help the industry reduce the size of the egg laying flock.

These measures apply equally to the egg industry in Wales and England.

Primary Schools

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department issues any guidance to local education authorities concerning making available to head teachers of primary schools the names and addresses of three and four-year-olds within the local education authority area who may be potential pupils for those schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Arrangements of that kind would generally be a matter for individual LEAs. Welsh Office Circular 5/83 on "Assessments and Statements of Special Educational Needs" gives advice about the admission to school of children under five with special education needs. It asks LEAs to give priority to such children when admitting children to nursery schools and classes; and it draws attention to the need for co-operation with social service departments and health authorities in bringing such children to the attention of the LEA.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report,* 12 December, column *395,* what information his Department has concerning the number of planning appeal decisions in national parks in Wales which were *(a)* allowed, *(b)* dismissed, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* undetermined in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 2 December at column *419.* Statistics are kept

concerning planning applications in national parks in Wales, but not planning appeal decisions. I am arranging for information about appeals to be collated from the beginning of 1989.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a table showing the number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed and dismissed in 1987 and the first quarter of 1988 broken down according to the nationality of the appellant and the type of decision appealed against.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is set out in the tables.

1 January to 31 December 1987

	India		*Pakistan*		*Bangladesh*		*EEC*		*All other countries*	
Appeal categories	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*
1. Exclusion—Appeal at port	3	15	12	44	0	11	0	3	14	51
2. Exclusion—External appeals	3	45	4	52	7	46	3	32	48	510
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	0	0	5	19	0	0	0	0	4	20
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for temporary purposes (not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)	23	45	29	123	36	93	0	2	281	763
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for employment, business or independent means (not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)	2	12	0	10	0	3	0	2	7	26
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by wives and children, other dependent relatives and returning residents	23	99	607	1,204	148	299	0	0	56	226
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	4	4	1	0	3	8	0	0	7	25
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	33	92	14	16	47	51	0	1	12	11
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	90	202	3	3	181	203	0	0	5	16
10. Variation of Landing Conditions	2	4	0	0	1	4	0	2	20	37
11. Refusal to vary leave to enter	31	173	6	71	19	137	0	22	143	1,131
12. Decision to make deportation order	5	22	1	7	6	19	0	2	27	149
13. Refusal to revoke deportation order	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	25
14. Giving of removal directions	1	3	0	0	0	5	0	1	2	39
15. Destination only appeal	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	18
Total	220	719	682	1,549	448	883	3	71	629	3,047

1 January to 31 March 1988

	India		*Pakistan*		*Bangladesh*		*EEC*		*All other countries*	
Appeal categories	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*
1. Exclusion—Appeal at port	0	2	1	5	0	5	0	0	4	28
2. Exclusion—External appeals	1	4	1	6	3	5	0	3	9	163
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	1	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	5
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for temporary purposes (not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)	3	20	5	40	31	60	0	0	54	202
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for employment, business or independent means (not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	7
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by wives and children, other dependent relatives and returning residents	4	21	81	156	23	39	0	0	10	39
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	8	15	2	5	20	35	0	0	4	5
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	18	24	0	0	41	59	0	0	2	2
10. Variation of Landing Conditions	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	23
11. Refusal to vary leave to enter	8	47	0	10	4	36	0	0	42	291
12. Decision to make deportation order	1	9	0	3	0	11	0	1	12	86
13. Refusal to revoke deportation order	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
14. Giving of removal directions	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	10
15. Destination only appeal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	44	147	93	231	123	253	0	4	139	869

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a table showing the number of appeals to the immigration appeal tribunal allowed and dismissed in 1987 and the first quarter of 1988.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is set out in the table:

	Allowed	*Dismissed*
1 January to 31 December 1987	205	344
1 January to 31 March 1988	16	50

NATIONAL FINANCE

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which organisations involved in promoting small businesses he expects to meet during his discussions prior to his 1989 Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not been asked to meet any organisations involved solely in promoting small businesses. Each year my right hon. Friend receives many requests for meetings and whilst it is not possible for him to meet everyone, all representations are considered most carefully in the run up to the Budget.

Cigarettes (Duty)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on the retail prices index if duty on cigarettes was raised by *(a)* five pence, *(b)* 10 pence and *(c)* 15 pence for a pack of 20 cigarettes.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that the effect on the retail prices index would be as follows:

Price increase per 20 cigarettes	*Effect on RPI Per cent.*
5 pence	0·1
10 pence	0·2
15 pence	0·3

Payroll Giving

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax revenue he estimated would be forgone under the payroll giving scheme for 1987-88 and 1988-89 at the time of the launch of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the progress of the scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The payroll giving scheme was announced in the March 1986 Budget. The financial statement and Budget report issued at that time noted that the cost of the new relief would depend on take-up but that it could reach £20 million in 1987-88. No estimate for 1988-89 was made. In practice the initial take-up was lower, but about 3,200 schemes have now been set up and the number of participants is continuing to increase.

International Tax Convention

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the United Kingdom proposes to sign the joint Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Council of Europe convention on mutual administrative assistance in tax matters which was opened for signature on 25 January.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Earlier this year, I invited representative bodies who had expressed an interest in this matter, together with any other interested parties, to express their views on whether the United Kingdom should sign this convention and, if so, with what reservations. I am grateful to those who responded and have given very careful consideration to all the views which were expressed.

The Government recognise the value which is rightly attached to international co-operation among fiscal authorities and the need to make adequate and effective arrangements to this end which are fair to taxpayers and the Revenue authorities concerned. Such co-operation plays an important part in ensuring the proper determination of tax liabilities on an international level. However, in view of the existing provisions for mutual assistance in this area provided, for example, by our extensive network of double taxation treaties and our European obligations, we have concluded that the United Kingdom need not become a party to the convention.

Tax Thresholds

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) by how much tax thresholds have increased in real terms between 1979-80 and 1988-89;

(2) how many people have been removed from paying income tax as a result of the raising of tax thresholds between 1979-80 and 1988-89;

(3) how much extra tax would *(a)* a single person and *(b)* a married couple with two children who have been taken out of paying income tax by the raising of thresholds be paying if tax thresholds had been increased in line with inflation.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Between 1979-80 and 1988-89, the single person's income tax allowance increased by 22 per cent. in real terms and the married man's allowance by 23 per cent. in real terms.

It is estimated that about 670,000 fewer single people and married couples are liable to income tax in 1988-89 compared with those who would be liable if 1979-80 allowances had been indexed for inflation to 1988-89 according to the statutory indexation provisions. With the basic rate at 25p, a single person has gained up to £1·35 per week and a married man up to £2·26 per week from the increases in allowances compared with indexation.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much a tax unit on the 40 per cent. tax rate would currently receive in mortgage interest tax relief on a mortgage of £30,000.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* In 1988-89, if current mortgage interest rates remain unchanged, a higher rate taxpayer with a typical £30,000 mortgage would receive mortgage interest tax relief of £1,390.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make it his policy to forward communications sent to him from the investigation department of the Salvation Army on behalf of families seeking missing relatives to those relatives.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* If the person concerned can be traced from the information provided, the Inland Revenue does forward letters in such cases.

Share Options

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to increase the limits on savings-related share option schemes for employees.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 December 1988]*: The operation of approved employee share schemes is kept under constant review. We shall continue to examine sympathetically the wide variety of proposals made for improvements in this area, to see how far they are capable of building on the impressive progress in employee share ownership which has already been achieved.

Personal Borrowing

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what, at the last available date, was the amount on a per capita basis of the net borrowings of the personal sector in *(a)* the whole of the United Kingdom, *(b)* the south east of England, *(c)* the south west of England, *(d)* the north west of England, *(e)* the north of England, *(f)* Scotland and *(g)* Wales.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 16 December 1988]*: There is no single agreed definition of "net borrowings" on which an answer can be based. Some relevant information may be found in statistical publications in the Library of the House. Balance sheet information on the United Kingdom personal sector is given in "Financial Statistics", table 14.4. The latest edition is for November 1988. More detailed but slightly less timely information is shown in "United Kingdom National Accounts"—the blue book —1988 edition, table 11.2. Similar information in terms of financial transactions rather than amounts outstanding is given in "Financial Statistics", tables 1.10, 9.2 and 9.3.

I regret that these data are not available on a regional basis.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Cells

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name the person who reports to his Department on the conditions under which people are held in police station cells or magistrate court cells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conditions in which prisoners are held in police stations and magistrates court cells are the responsibility of the chief officers of the police forces concerned. Chief officers are not required to report to my right hon. Friend on the operational aspects of their work, but we are very well aware of their concerns. Strenuous and successful efforts are being made to reduce reliance on police cells for housing people who ought to be in prison.

Lay visitors schemes are operating in most of the London boroughs. Lay visitors have access to police station and magistrates court cells and they may report to my right hon. Friend on the conditions for prisoners held there.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police stations cells and magistrate court cells in England and Wales in which people on remand are held.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Records of which police stations and magistrates court cells are being used by the police to hold remand prisoners are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. On 12 December, prisoners were held in cells belonging to the following police forces:

Bedfordshire
Cheshire
City of London
Essex
Greater Manchester
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Merseyside
Metropolitan
South Yorkshire
Surrey
Sussex
Thames Valley
Warwickshire
West Midlands
West Yorkshire

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of people being held on remand in police station cells or magistrate court cells on 6 December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 6 December, 945 persons, most of whom would have been on remand, were held in police or magistrates court cells in England and Wales.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the procedures under which a person being held on remand in police station cells or magistrate court cells can make complaints on the conditions in which they are being held; and how many complaints have been made in the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prisoners may make complaints about the conditions of their detention to the custody officer at the police station or magistrates court in which they are held. Any such complaints received will be reported to the chief officer of the police force concerned. Prisoners may also complain to lay visitors to police stations and magistrates court cells in London, who may convey such complaints to the chief officer via the officer in charge at the police station or court.

Records of the number of complaints made are not available.

Racial Harassment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to encourage local authorities to take a more active role in countering racial harassment; whether he will make funds available for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government believe that it is important that vigorous and visible action is taken to combat racial harassment.

The ministerial group on crime prevention is considering a report by an interdepartmental working group which has examined ways in which the police and local authorities might improve their response to racial harassment within their existing resources.

National Disaster Centre

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce a national disaster/emergency centre to co-ordinate the supply of information.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 15 December at column 699.

Abortion (Inquests)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has

received concerning the procedures adopted in determining whether inquests should be held on the deaths of babies discovered alive following an abortion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evenett) on 15 December 1988 at column *711*.

Vehicle Clamping

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many vehicles have been clamped since the introduction of the clamping procedures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the commissioner that a total of 353,106 vehicles were clamped by the Metropolitan police between 15 May 1983, when clamping operations began, and 31 October 1988.

Football (Offenders)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the convicted criminals who have received exclusion orders during the last twelve months have been caught re-offending by attempting to enter a football ground.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available.

Compensation (Metropolitan Police)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much in compensation, both in court and in out of court settlements, the Metropolitan police has paid to members of the public who have brought civil cases for damages against them in each of the years 1985 to 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the amounts paid by the Metropolitan police under awards made by the courts and in settlements out of court arising from allegations of wrongful acts by Metropolitan police officers are as folows:

	Awards made by the courts £	*Settlements out of court* £
1985	13,949	193,588
1986	46,836	330,332
1987	11,233	173,714
1988[1]	101,535	231,726

[1] To 15 December.

Leicestershire Constabulary

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statememt on his response to requests from the Leicestershire police authority for an increase in the force establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is not yet in a position to announce his decision on the Leicestershire application, and others, for more police posts. He hopes to do so soon.

Prison Visits

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visits prisoners at Camp Hill prison are allowed per month; and what is the average duration of those visits.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prisoners at Camp Hill are allowed two visits per month. The average duration of visits is one hour 30 minutes.

Deportation

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* decisions to deport and *(b)* deportation orders were authorised in each quarter of 1988 to the latest available date; and how many people left the United Kingdom under supervised departure in each quarter of 1988 to the latest available date.

Mr. Renton: The available information is contained in table 14 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 38/88 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Third Quarter 1988" which was published on 15 December.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate when, and under which statutory provision, he delegated his powers to issue notices of intention to deport persons, to issue restriction orders, to detain and to authorise supervised departures to officers of the immigration service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Except where specifically provided otherwise, it is well understood that powers conferred on a Minister by statute can be exercised on his behalf by his officials. The Immigration Act 1971 clearly distinguishes between the powers of the Secretary of State (including, therefore, officials acting on his behalf) and those of an immigration officer. Nevertheless, it is possible for the Secretary of State to delegate his powers to a senior member of his staff in the immigration service who is not, in his capacity as an immigration officer, involved in the case in question. Where potential deportees under section 3(5)(a) are traced by the immigration service, my right hon. Friend decided, on this basis, and with effect from 1 August 1988, to delegate his powers to issue a notice of intention to deport, to issue a restriction order, to detain and to authorise supervised departure to members of the immmigration service at not less than inspector level.

Immigration Applications

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time taken to process applications for *(a)* registration and *(b)* naturalisation; and how long those applying in both of those categories in December 1987 can expect to wait.

Mr. Renton: The latest available information about processing times was contained in the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 30 November at column *247*. It is not possible to give a reliable forecast of how long applications for naturalisation received in the month of December 1987 will take to complete, but all applications for registration received by the end of 1987 will have been completed by April 1990 and many of them will have been completed well before then.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for settlement by wives and children in (i) Dhaka and (ii) Islamabad were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused, *(d)* deferred at first interview, *(e)* lapsed and *(f)* outstanding and awaiting first interview for each quarter since the beginning of 1987.

Mr. Renton: Information up to the first quarter was published in the *Official Report*, columns *647-50*, in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 20 July 1988. Corresponding information for the second and third quarters of 1988 is given in the table.

Wives and children applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

Post	*Applications*					
	Newly received	*Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*	*Referred or deferred*[3]	*Withdrawn or lapsed*	*Awaiting first interview at end of period*
Dhaka						
1988 2nd quarter	1,370	1,290	280	640	250	3,500
3rd quarter	1,290	1,110	350	580	360	3,500
Islamabad						
1988 2nd quarter	1,150	920	50	690	100	2,300
3rd quarter	1,020	930	50	690	90	2,300

[1] Including persons considered for a certificate of entitlement to, or confirmation of, the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Referred to Home Office for decision or deferred for further inquiries.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance as *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées in each British post in (1) Kingston, Jamaica, (2) Manila, (3) Hong Kong, (4) Washington DC, (5) Ghana and (6) Nigeria were (i) granted and (ii) refused in each quarter since January 1987; how many such applications in each category, at each post and in each quarter were refused *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly because of the primary purpose rule; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were (x) wholly and (y) partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Renton: The only data available centrally relate to Hong Kong and information up to the first quarter of 1988 was published in the *Official Report* on 20 July 1987 at column *649* in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). Corresponding information for the second and third quarters of 1988 is given in the table.

Applications in Hong Kong for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications	
	Granted[1]	*Refused initially*
Wives		
1988		
2nd quarter	40	[3]—
3rd quarter	50	[4]—
Husbands, fiancés[2]		
1988		
2nd quarter	20	[3]—
3rd quarter	20	[4]—
Fiancées		
1988		
2nd quarter	10	[4]—
3rd quarter	[3]—	[4]—

[1] Granted initially or on appeal.
[2] Data for husbands and fiancés separately are not available.
[3] Five or fewer.
[4] Nil.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance from *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées made at British posts in (1) New Delhi, (2) Bombay, (3) Calcutta, (4) Madras, (5) Dhaka, (6) Islamabad, (7) Karachi and (8) Colombo for each quarter since January 1987 were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused; how many refusals at each post were *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly because the visa officer was not satisfied that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration; how many refusals at each post were *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly because the visa officer was not satisfied that the couple could support and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were *(x)* wholly and *(y)* partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Renton: The information available up to the first quarter of 1988 was published in the *Official Report*, columns *886-88* in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 19 October 1988. Corresponding information for the second and third quarters of 1988 is in the table. Information on refusal rates which take account of successful appeals is not available quarterly.

Husbands, finances, wives and fiancees in the Indian sub-continent applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Husbands 1988		*Financés 1988*		*Wives 1988*		*Fiancés 1988*	
	2nd quarter	*3rd quarter*	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)								
Applications received[1]	60	50	60	60	160	130	70	60
Applications granted[2]	40	30	30	20	110	150	60	40

	Husbands 1988		Finances 1988		Wives 1988		Fiancés 1988	
	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter
Applications refused initially	20	40	50	50	[3]	10	20	10
Bombay (including Madras)								
Applications received[1]	60	60	50	50	230	200	50	30
Applications granted[2]	70	50	40	50	270	300	30	50
Applications refused initially	30	30	50	40	[3]	10	10	10
Dhaka								
Applications received[1]	60	70	[3]	[3]	340	300	10	[3]
Applications granted[2]	20	20	[3]	[3]	290	260	[3]	10
Applications refused initially	20	20	[3]	[3]	50	80	[3]	[3]
Islamabad (including Karachi)								
Applications received[1]	380	320	180	140	720	680	60	60
Applications granted[2]	70	60	50	40	710	640	80	40
Applications refused initially	90	100	80	90	30	20	[3]	—

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Five or fewer.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* single entry and *(b)* multiple entry visit visas were *(x)* received, *(y)* granted and *(z)* refused at each post in the Indian subcontinent, Ghana and Nigeria in each quarter of 1987 and the first quarter of 1988; and what was the delay between application and interview for those whose applications were felt to need a second or long interview at each of the above posts in (i) January 1987, (ii) June 1987, (iii) January 1988 and (iv) the nearest available date.

Mr. Renton: Information up to the first quarter of 1988 was published in the *Official Report*, columns *42-44*, in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 25 July 1988. Applicants for a visit visa who required a lengthy interview at the end of September 1988 had waited two days in Bombay, 12 days in Accra and one day in Lagos; in other posts the interview was carried out on the day the application was received.

Immigration Vouchers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were waiting for special quota vouchers in (i) India and (ii) East Africa in *(a)* May 1987 and *(b)* December 1987; when those issued with vouchers on those dates had applied; how many vouchers were issued in (1) India and (2) East Africa in: (A) 1987 and (B) the first quarter of 1988; when those applying can now expect ot receive vouchers in *(a)* India and *(b)* East Africa in (x) 1987 and (y) the first half of 1988.

Mr. Renton: Information up to the first quarter of 1988 was published in the *Official Report*, columns *645-48* in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 20 July 1988. Corresponding information on voucher applications received in the second quarter of 1988 and expected waiting times at the end of September 1988 is give in the table.

Persons applying for a special voucher for entry to the United Kingdom

Country	Applications newly received second quarter 1988 (number of persons)	Expected waiting time to main interview for persons applying at end September 1988 (number of months)
India	80	less than 30[1]
Kenya	80	2½
Tanzania	[2]	1
Malawi	10	½
Zambia	40	1
Elsewhere	10	n/a
Total	220	

[1] Figure relates to non-property applicants. Priority applicants (ie widows with child in the United Kingdom, heads of household aged 65 or over, and special compassionate cases) are interviewed within three months.
[2] Five or fewer.
n/a not avilable.

Immigration Queues

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children were waiting in each queue at each post in the Indian subcontinent on 31 March.

Mr. Renton: The information requested was published in the *Official Report*, columns *645-46* in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 20 July 1988.

Roberto Fiore

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Italian authorities about the continued presence in the United Kingdom of Roberto Fiore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 15 December at column *721*.

Television Companies

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his written answer of 15 December to the hon. Member for Southend, East, *Official Report*, column *705*, if he will list those Community rules which prevent Her Majesty's Government from discriminating between United Kingdom and other European Economic Community television companies;

(2) pursuant to his written answer of 15 December to the hon. Member for Southend, East, *Official Report*, column *705*, why Her Majesty's Government do not consider it desirable for non-European Economic Community companies to be eligible to have the control of television channels in the United Kingdom;

(3) pursuant to his written answer of 15 December to the hon. Member for Southend, East, *Official Report*, column *705*, what information he has as to how many television channels or stations in other member states of the European Economic Community are controlled by United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Renton: A restriction on control of United Kingdom television companies by other EC companies would conflict with obligations under the treaty of Rome such as those relating to freedom to provide services (articles 59-66) and to participate in the capital of companies (article 221). Subject to this, the Government consider that foreign control of services using United Kingdom broadcasting frequencies should be prevented because of the power and cultural influence of those services. Information on shareholdings by United Kingdom companies in television channels in other EC countries is not held centrally.

Peacetime Emergencies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reasons were given to his Department by the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority for the closure of London's peacetime emergency control and communications centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No specific reasons were given to the Home Office by the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority for its decision to close the greater London emergency co-ordination centre. The Government's position was set out in the reply given to a question from the hon. Member on 31 March 1988 at column *682*.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to promote legislation to impose a duty upon local authorities to prepare plans for peacetime disasters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 15 December at column *699*.

London Underground (Policing)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on whether any plans exist to use officers from the Metropolitan police on the London Underground system during the Christmas period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The London Underground is policed by British Transport police, who are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. There is close liaison between British Transport police and the Metropolitan police and I understand from the commissioner that, as at other times of the year, officers of the Metropolitan police will be available over the Christmas period to assist British Transport police officers on the Underground if the need arises.

Firearms (Amendment) Act

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to implement the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Mr. Hurd: I made a commencement order on 19 December 1988 which will bring into effect on 1 February 1989 the following provisions:

Section	*Provision*
1	Prohibited weapons and ammunition
7(1)	Converted prohibited weapons
8	De-activated weapons
9	Photographs on certificates
10	Statements in support of certificate applications
12	Revocation of certificates
13(2)(3)(4)(5)	Firearms dealers
14	Auctioneers, carriers and warehousemen
16	Borrowed rifles on private premises
21	Payments in respect of prohibited weapons
22	Firearms consultative committee
23(1)(2)(3) and (7)	Minor and consequential amendments
24(1)	Expenses
25	Interpretation and supplementary provisions

Transitional arrangements have been made to allow owners of newly prohibited weapons a period of three months—from 1 February to 30 April 1989—in which to dispose of their weapons. They may do so by sale to a registered firearms dealer, by transfer to such a dealer for the purpose of having the gun de-activated or, if the gun was legitimately held before 23 September 1987, by surrender to the police under the Government's buy-in scheme. Full details of the scheme together with an application form will be included in a leaflet which will be available from police stations in January.

Transitional arrangements have also been made to allow registered firearms dealers to continue to handle newly prohibited weapons for the purpose of their disposal for a period of nine months until 31 October 1989.

A second order to be made next year will bring into effect the remaining provisions.

Warning and Monitoring Arrangements

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the outcome of the review of warning and monitoring arrangements in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have received the report of the review. With the agreement of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Northern ireland and for Defence, I have today placed in the Library of the House a summary of the principal findings. The review has been conducted with great thoroughness and amounts to the most comprehensive analysis of our warning and monitoring arrangements for many years.

The review took account of current planning assumptions, technological advances and wider developments in civil protection. It made proposals for the development of a new warning system and for the automation of functions associated with monitoring. It also assessed the extent to which the warning and monitoring arrangements might usefully be applied to certain peacetime emergencies.

The programme of change proposed will require detailed scrutiny. In particular, the financial and operational implications will need further consideration by means of a number of detailed studies in key areas. No decisions have been taken about the review at this stage. Officials will now consult widely on its findings.

Blasphemy

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to extend the ambit of the offence of blasphemy to include non-Christian religions.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* In its "Report on Offences against Religion and Public Worship", published in 1985, the Law Commission recommended by a majority that the existing common law offence of blasphemy should be abolished. A minority took the view that the existing offence should be repealed and replaced with a criminal offence which applied to all religions. This view was supported by the bishop of London's group on blasphemy, which reported earlier this year. There is therefore no consensus for reform in this difficult and sensitive area of the law and we have no present plans for legislation.

Mr. Errol Codling

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much it cost to send two Scotland Yard detectives to accompany Mr. Errol "Ranking Dread" Codling to Jamaica recently; how long the detectives spent in Jamaica; and where they were accommodated;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *400*, why it was necessary to send two Scotland Yard detectives to accompany Mr. Errol "Ranking Dread" Codling to Jamaica on 8 November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answers 1 December and 8 December 1988]:* Mr. Codling was removed from the United Kingdom as an illegal entrant on 9 November following his earlier deportation from the United States of America to the United Kingdom under a false name and using a United Kingdom passport which he had obtained fraudulently. As he was also wanted in Jamaica in connection with a crime of violence, he was accompanied by two police officers.

The police officers took hotel accommodation in Jamaica and arrived back in this country on 13 November. During their stay they carried out a number of inquiries relating to crimes in this country. The travel and subsistence costs of the officers totalled £3,724.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of *(a)* schoolchildren and *(b)* others are estimated to have been involved in solvent abuse in each of the last five years; what further measures he proposes to eliminate this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that information on the extent of solvent misuse is not available in the form requested. A number of limited studies have estimated prevalence among selected samples of young people but it would not be valid to extrapolate from these to national figures. As regards measures taken to reduce solvent misuse, I refer to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) on 6 December at column *131*. We are reviewing the scope for further action in this area.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Applications

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for each of the years since 1983, how many planning applications specifically concerning water authority land and rejected by local authorities or other planning bodies in England and Wales, have been called in by the Secretary of State; and, of those called in, how many have ultimately been successful on appeal.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Newmarket (Boundary Transfer)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a public statement was made by an official of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to the effect that Newmarket should be transferred to Suffolk.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A misleading newspaper article published on 7 December indicated that the commission had reached firm conclusions about the boundary between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk in the Newmarket area. The commission's spokesman made it quite clear that this was not the case and that they would look at all the options again in the light of representations received in response to its draft proposals, including the option of no change. The secretary of the commission has asked the editor to publish a letter to correct the false impression given by the article.

Property Services Agency

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to refurbish the canteen at the Property Services Agency offices at Brooklands avenue, Cambridge; how much this refurbishment is expected to cost; what are the implications of this refurbishment for staff currently at Newmarket; and for what purpose.

Mr. Chope: Plans are being prepared to rationalise and refurbish the canteen serving the 1,100 staff of all Departments at Brooklands avenue. The estimated cost is £450,000. The space released will be converted to offices for the remaining PSA staff at Newmarket. This move will complete PSA eastern region's reorganisation proposals which my right hon. Friend approved in March 1987.

Sports Clubs

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is taking steps to bring England and Wales into line with Northern Ireland with regard to mandatory rate relief for non-profit making sports clubs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. We intend to continue with the present system whereby local authorities in England and Wales can grant up to 100 per cent. rate relief to non-profit making sports clubs. The mandatory 65 per cent. rate relief given to sports clubs in Northern Ireland under the Rates Amendment (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (SI 1979 No: 297 (NI.4) reflects the average level of discretionary rate relief given at the time to similar bodies by local authorities in England and Wales.

Land (Newham)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* the area and *(b)* the value of land at (i) Abbey Mills pumping station and (ii) the Mill Head site, in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Trippier: A site of 21·6 acres, which is part of the Abbey Mills pumping station (32 acres overall), is entered on the Newham statutory register of vacant public land. No information on either site value or the Mill Head site is held on the register.

EC (Birds)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those United Kingdom sites which qualify as important bird areas under the European Economic Commission birds directive, indicating those listed as special protection areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Details of those sites which, in the opinion of the Nature Conservancy Council, are important bird areas and which may meet the criteria for designation as special protection areas under the EC birds directive are set out below. Those sites already formally designated, either wholly or in part, as SPAs have been marked with an asterisk.

Scotland	*District*
North Rona and Sula Sgeir	Western Isles
Flannan Isles	Western Isles
St. Kilda	Western Isles
Shiant Isles	Western Isles
West Sound of Harris	Western Isles
Monach Isles	Western Isles
Balramald	Western Isles
Baleshare and Kirkibost	Western Isles
Bagh Nam Foailean—Ardivachar	Western Isles
Iochdair and Genrinish Machair and Loch Bee	Western Isles
*Taosh an Iar Na Meadhoinean (including Loch Druidibeg)	Western Isles
West Sound of Barra	Western Isles
Mingulay and Berneray	Western Isles
Caithness Cliffs	Caithness
Caithness Lochs	Caithness
The Peatlands	Caithness and Sutherland
Handa	Sutherland
Loch Assynt, Loch Urigill and nearby Lochs	Sutherland
*Rhum	Highland
*Priest Island	Ross and Cromarty
Loch Maree	Ross and Cromarty
Lower Dornoch Firth	Ross and Cromarty/Sutherland
*Loch Eye	Ross and Cromarty, Highland
Cromarty Firth	Ross and Cromarty
Affric-Cannich Hills and Glens	Inverness
Lochs Ashie and Ruthven	Inverness
Beauly Firth	Inverness
Sula Skerry and Stack	Orkney
Moray Firth (Burghead and Spey Bays)	Moray/Inverness/Grampian
Loch Spynie	Moray/Grampian
Loch Oire	Moray/Grampian
Troup, Pennan and Lions Head	Banff and Buchan
Quarry Head—Fraserburgh Coast	Banff and Buchan
Loch of Strathbeg	Banff and Buchan
Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Lochs	Gordon
*Loch of Skene	Gordon, Grampian
Fowlsheugh	Kincardine
Muir of Dinnet	Kincardine
St. Cyrus	Kincardine
Glen Tamar	Kincardine
Lochnagar	Kincardine
Cairngorms	Badenoch and Strathspey, Kincardine
Abernethy Forest	Badenoch and Strathspey
Kinveachy	Badenoch and Strathspey
Loch Vaa	Badenoch and Strathspey
Loch Alvie	Badenoch and Strathspey
River Spey—Insh Marshes	Badenoch and Strathspey
Tiree and Coll	Argyle and Bute
Treshnish Isles	Argyle and Bute
North Colonsay and Western Cliffs	Argyle and Bute
Islay: Rinns	Argyle and Bute
Islay: Glac Na Criche	Argyle and Bute
Islay: Feur Lochain	Argyle and Bute
*Islay: Loch Gruinart	Argyle and Bute
Moray Firth (Munlochy Bay—Findhorn Bay)	Moray/Inverness
Hermaness and Saxa Vord	Shetland
Croussa Field and The Heogs	Shetland
Fetlar	Shetland
Blackpark, Yell	Shetland
Ramna Stacks and Gruney	Shetland
North Roe, Mainland	Shetland
Papa Stour	Shetland
Foula	Shetland
Noss	Shetland
Mousa (part)	Shetland
Loch Spiggie	Shetland
Fair Isle	Shetland
North Ronaldsay Coast	Orkney
East Sanday	Orkney
Southeastern Stronsay	Orkney
Papa Westray (North Hill and Holm)	Orkney
West Westray	Orkney
South Westray Coast	Orkney
Eday	Orkeny
Rousay (part	Orkney
Mill Dam, Shapinsay	Orkney
Marwick Head	Orkney
North Mainland Coast	Orkney
West Mainland Moors	Orkney
Lochs of Harray and Stenness	Orkney
Orphir and Stenness Hills	Orkney
Hoy	Orkney
*Islay : Bridgend Flats	Argyll and Bute
*Islay : Laggan	Argyll and Bute
*Islay : Eilean Na Muice Dubh (Duich Mosss)	Argyll and Bute
Islay : the Oa	Argyll and Bute
Rhunahaorine	Argyll and Bute
Machrihanish and Tangy Loch	Argyll and Bute
Sanda	Argyll and Bute

Scotland	*District*
North End of Bute	Argyll and Bute
North Arran Mountains	Cunninghame
Ailsa Craig	Kyle and Carrick
Loch Lomond	Dumbarton/Stirling
Inner Clyde Estuary	Dumbarton
Lochinch and Torrs Warren	Wigtown
Castle Loch	Annandale and Eskdale
Wigtown Bay	Wigtown
Loch Ken and Dee Marshes	Stewartry
Caenlochan	Angus, Perth and Kinross
Montrose Basin	Angus
Loch of Lintrathen	Angus
Tay-Isla Valley	Perth and Kinross
Dupplin Lochs	Perth and Kinross
Drummond Lochs	Perth and Kinross
Carsebreck and Rhynd Lochs	Perth and Kinross
Loch Leven	Perth and Kinross
Drumochter Hills	Badenoch and Strathspey Perth and Kinross
Ben Dubhchraig	Stirling
Flanders Moss and Lake of Menteith	Stirling
Firth of Tay	Perth and Kinross/Dundee, North East Fife
Eden Estuary, Tentsmuir Point and Abertay Sands	North East Fife/Angus
Cameron Reservoir	North East Fife
Inner Firth of Forth	Falkirk/Dumfermline
Outer Firth of Forth	East Lothian/Kirkcaldy/North East Fife/Edinburgh
Fala Flow	Midlothian
Westwater	Tweeddale
Moorfoot Hills	Tweeddale
*Gladhouse Reservoir	Midlothian
*Hoselaw Loch, Din Moss	Roxburgh
Greenlaw Moor and Hule Moss	Berwick
St. Abbs Head to Fast Castle	Berwick
Lewis Peatlands	Western Isles
North Harris Mountains	Western Isles
Loch Scadavay	Western Isles
Peatland Firth Islands	Caithness/Orkney
Cape Wrath—Aodann Mhor	Caithness
Sumburgh Head	Shetland
Copinsay	Orkney
Bullers of Buchan and Whinnyfold	Banff

Wales	*County*
Berwyn	Clwyd-Powys, Gwynedd
Traeth Lafan (Lavan Sands) Conway Bay	Gwynedd
Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and The Skerries	Gwynedd
Holy Island Coast	Gwynedd
Bardsey Island and Aberdaron Coast	Gwynedd
Elenydd-Mallaen	Powys
*Skokholm and Skomer	Dyfed
*Grassholm	Dyfed
Carmarthen Bay	Dyfed
Burry Inlet	Dyfed/West Glamorgan
Swansea Bay—Blackpill	West Glamorgan
*Severn Estuary	South Glamorgan/Gwent (also Gloucestershire, Avon and Somerset)

England	*County*
Irthinghead Mires	Cumbria/Northumberland
*Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	Cumbria (also part South West Scotland)
Duddon Estuary	Cumbria
Morecambe Bay	Cumbria/Lancashire
*Leighton Moss	Lancashire
Bowland Fells	Lancashire
*Ribble and Alt Estuaries	Lancashire
Thorne and Hatfield Moors	South Yorkshire/Humberside
*Martin Mere	Lancashire
Lindisfarne	Northumberland
*Farne Islands	Northumberland
Northumberland Coast	Northumberland
*Coquet Island	Northumberland
Muggleswick, Stanhope and Wolsingham Commons	Durham
*Holburn Moss	Northumberland
Bollihope and Middleton Commons	Durham
*Upper Teesdale and Moor House	Durham, North Yorkshire, Cumbria
Bowes Moor	Durham
Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast	Cleveland
Spaunton, Wheeldale, Egton and Glaisdale Moors	North Yorkshire
Abbotside, Askrigg and Mallerstang Commons	North Yorkshire/Cumbria
*Derwent Ings	North Yorkshire/Humberside
Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs	Humberside
Hornsea Mere	Humberside
Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast	Humberside/Lincolnshire
Mersey Estuary	Merseyside/Cheshire
Peak District Moors	Derbyshire/South Yorkshire/Staffordshire
Walmore Common	Gloucestershire
Rutland Water	Leicestershire
Nene Washes	Cambridgeshire
Ouse Washes	Cambridgeshire/Norfolk
*The Wash	Lincolnshire/Norfolk
North Norfolk Coast	Norfolk
Upper Thurne Broads and Marshes	Norfolk
Ant Broads and Marshes	Norfolk
Bure Broads and Marshes	Norfolk
Yare Broads and Marshes	Norfolk
Breckland Heaths	Norfolk/Suffolk
Minsmere—Walberswick	Suffolk
*Orfordness—Havergate	Suffolk
Stour and Orwell Estuary	Suffolk/Essex
Hamford Water	Essex
Abberton Reservoir	Essex
Blackwater, Colne and Dengle	Essex
River Crouch Marshes	Essex
Foulness and Maplin Sands	Essex
Benfleet and Southend Marshes	Essex
Isles of Scilly Coastal Habitats	Cornwall
Exe Estuary	Devon
Taw and Torridge Estuary	Devon
Somerset Levels and Moors	Somerset
*Chew Valley Lake	Avon
Poole Basin	Dorset
*Chesil Beach and The Fleet	Dorset
Horton Common and Holt Heath	Dorset
Porton Down	Wiltshire/Hampshire
Windsor Forest and Great Park	Berkshire
Avon Valley	Hampshire
New Forest	Hampshire
West Solent Marshes and Southampton Water	Hampshire/Isle of Wight
Woolmer Forest	Hampshire
*Chichester and Langstone Harbours	Hampshire/West Sussex
Lee Valley	Greater London
Chobham to Yateley Commons	Surrey/Hampshire/Berkshire
Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons	Surrey
*Pagham Harbour	West Sussex
Pavensey Levels	East Sussex

England	*County*
Dungeness-Pett Levels	Kent/East Sussex
Stodmarsh	Kent
South Thames Marshes	Kent
Medway Estuary and Marshes	Kent
*The Swale and South Sheppey	Kent
Thanet Coast	Kent
*Dee Estuary	Clwyd, Cheshire, Merseyside
Shap Fells	Cumbria
Tamar Complex	Devon
Bodmin Moor	Cornwall

Housing

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list showing the extent and locations of foam slag and no fines houses in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The Department estimates that some 300,000 system-built poured concrete houses and flats have been built since 1920: and that over two thirds are of no fines constuction. The Building Research Establishment's forthcoming technical guidance, on the number of different no fines types, will include information on numbers and locations. One hundred and ninety-four poured concrete houses using formed slag aggregate have been identified in north-east Derbyshire; a similar material was also used for the precast concrete blocks and wall panels in the 850 Duplex foam slag and 1,622 Glasgow foamed slag houses in Scotland.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline his Department's initiatives since 1979 to improve housing provision in rural areas; and what further initiatives he plans.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* Since 1979 the Government have taken a number of initiatives to improve housing provision in all parts of the country. These include measures to encourage owner occupation and to stimulate choice and competition in the rented sector.

In addition there have been the following initiatives aimed specifically at rural areas:

1979-88

From June 1984 to March 1988 the Rural Development Commission encouraged housing association schemes in rural areas by providing funds to cover extra costs incurred as a result of their rural location, (the topping up scheme).

Funding has been provided through the Housing Corporation and the Rural Development Commission for the national agricultural central rural trust, to help the trust set up and support rural housing associations.

The Rural Development Commission sponsors an advance land purchase fund which is administered by the national agricultural centre rural trust to purchase sites on behalf of housing association prior to Housing Corporation funding being made available.The Rural Development Commission has been involved in the provision of 14 craft houses with integral workshops.

From 1982 to 1987 the Rural Development Commission ran an experimental scheme to encourage the building of shared equity houses in rural areas.

1988

On 5 July this year the Secretary of State published a statement outlining the Government's policy towards housing in rural areas and our proposals for increasing the supply of low-cost housing in such areas. The statement outlined the roles housing associations, the private sector and local authorities can play in meeting needs for low cost housing.

The proposals included:

An increase in the Rural Development Commission's funding of the national agricultural centre rural trust this year to nearly treble last year's level,

Adoption by the Housing Corporation of more flexible criteria for the selection of housing association schemes in rural areas,

An increase in the number of housing association homes for rent funded by the Housing Corporation in rural areas. The number of new homes approved was due to double to 300 this year and double again over the next two years to reach 600 units by 1990-91.

Following the Secretary of State's announcement on 1 November of a substantial increase in the Housing Corporation's programme over the next three years we announced on 14 December that the corporation has agreed to bring forward to 1989-90 its target of approving 600 new rented homes in the special rural programme. It will also be targeting more of its increased programme of housing for sale to rural areas. A further announcement will be made in due course on targets for later years and on the Housing Corporation's investment in rural areas generally.

Planning and Housing in Rural Areas

Since 1979 we have issued a number of circulars and planning policy guidance notes giving advice to local planning authorities on the provision of an adequate supply of housing land and the need to balance the requirements for development with the continuing need to protect their countryside.

On 5 July this year the Secretary of State published a discussion paper on the planning aspects of housing in rural areas. This included discussion of the possibility of new villages in certain circumstances.

BISF Properties (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met owners of BISF properties in Bilsborough, Nottingham, to discuss mortgagability and designation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Together with the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) I met owners of BISF properties at Bilborough on 15 December. We discussed the progress being made, with Nottingham city council and local lending institutions, on measures to remove blight and help owners finance improvement work.

Heritage

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applicantions for grants for rescue archaeology were made to English Heritage in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988; what was the total sum applied for in each of these years; how many grants were approved and at what total cost in each of these years; and how much money in each year was for post-excavation projects;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the English Heritage central excavations unit and its rôle in rescue archaeology;

(3) how many applications were received for grants from county sites and monuments records; what amount these totalled; how many awards were made; and for what total, in the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88;

(4) how many applications were received in the year 1986-87 by English Heritage for grants for the repair of individually outstanding secular buildings; how many grants were offered; what was the total of such grants; and if he will provide equivalent figures for 1987-88;

(5) how many prosecutions have been taken by English Heritage against landowners for carrying out work on schedule sites without consent; and what have been the results of such prosecutions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for English Heritage.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the role of English Heritage in conserving field monuments, and on the employment of field monument wardens; how many there are; and if there are plans to increase their numbers and use.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: English Heritage has a general duty, among other things, to secure the preservation of ancient monuments and historic buildings in England. It is my right hon. Friend's statutory adviser on scheduling of ancient monuments and on applications for scheduled monument consent. It also has powers to provide financial assistance to owners for the preservation of field and other monuments (whether scheduled or not). I have sent the hon. Member a copy of English Heritage's latest annual report and I am sure the chairman would be happy to provide further information on their activities.

Scheduled Monument Consent

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications were received in 1987 for the scheduled monument consent; and what expertise exists within his Department to deal with such applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 781. English Heritage advise my right hon. Friend on scheduled monument consent cases.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many recommendations for scheduled monument consent have been prepared for the Salisbury plain training area; and how long it will take to process these applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that, subject to current discussions with the Ministry of Defence, English Heritage expects to recommend between 250 and 300 monuments for scheduling early in the new year. They will be processed as quickly as possible.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications were made during 1987 by English Heritage for the repair, acquisition or analysis of ancient monuments; and how many have been granted.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The majority of English Heritage's repair grant cases and works projects do not require my right hon. Friend's consent. The Department has details of only a small proportion of the cases. There is no central record.

Archaeology

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received from English Heritage on forestry policy as it affects archaeology.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No formal advice has been received. English Heritage works closely with the Forestry Commission on forestry matters which may affect sites of archaeological interest.

English Heritage

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of funding for English Heritage; and what is the planned level for each of the next three years, to enable it to complete its scheduled monument programme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: English Heritage's grant in aid for 1988-89 is £65·863 million; the provision for the next three years is £72·3 million, £74·5 million, £76·3 million. There is no specific allocation within these figures for the scheduled monument programme: English Heritage is responsible for the allocation of its overall resources between individual programmes.

Tinsley Park

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many representations he has received about the proposed opencast coal mining and airport plans on Tinsley park in south Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has had any representations from the Sheffield urban development corporation about the proposed opencast coal mine and STOL airport at Tinsley park in south Yorkshire;

(3) how many representations he has received about a public inquiry into the plans for an opencast coal mine and a STOL airport at Tinsley park in south Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received 32 representations about the proposed open cast coal mining at Tinsley park, 16 about the proposed airport and seven about possible public inquiries into these proposed developments. No formal representations have been received from the Sheffield development corporation about either proposal.

I understand that planning applications for both developments have recently been considered by the relevant local planning authorities, Sheffield MBC and Rotherham MBC. They have both resolved to refer the airport application to the Secretary of State as a departure from the approved development plan. We shall consider the matter carefully when the full details of the proposal are received.

So far as the application for opencast mining is concerned, I understand that detailed discussions are underway between the parties to establish an acceptable planning framework for open-casting.

Sewage Treatment

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of non-compliant sewage treatment works in 1986 and 1987 in England and Wales, broken down by water authority area.

Mr. Ridley: The number of water authority sewage treatment works with numerical consent conditions which did not comply with their consents in 1986 and 1987 is given in the following table.

Sewage treatment works with numerical consent conditions: non-compliance 1986 and 1987—England and Wales

Water authority	Number		Number tested		Works in breach of consent			
					Number		Percentage of works tested	
	1986	1987	1986	1987	1986	1987	1986	1987
Anglian	782	760	774	754	309	260	40	34
Northumbrian	196	182	196	82	37	27	19	15
North West	458	448	458	448	62	55	14	12
Severn-Trent	773	753	762	742	179	160	23	22
Southern	282	274	282	274	54	39	19	14
South West	226	226	188	219	55	65	29	30
Thames	374	382	374	379	67	70	18	18
Welsh	803	764	668	611	112	108	17	18
Wessex	272	272	272	270	39	29	14	11
Yorkshire	380	360	380	351	88	74	23	21
England and Wales	4,546	4,421	4,354	4,230	1,002	887	23	21

London Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received requesting section 138 powers to be granted to the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations were received earlier this year from the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority and one other person.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to extend section 138 powers to the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Viginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has no plans to extend section 138 powers to the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority. There is no case for giving the authority access to these powers.

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish a model instrument of appointment under the Water Bill for the water and sewerage undertakers.

Mr. Howard: I have today made copies available to Members of the Standing Committee considering the Water Bill, and placed copies in the Library of both Houses accompanied by an explanatory memorandum. The model includes conditions concerning the charges, accounts, levels of service, asset availability and underground assets of the future water utility companies, and includes requirements on those companies to have codes of practice concerning customers and relations with customer service committees, disconnection of water supplies, and liability for leaking of water. The companies will also be required to provide information to the Director General of Water Services and to pay fees to cover regulatory costs.

Rating Reform

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of both the numbers and the average liability of *(a)* one parent families, *(b)* two parent families, *(c)* single pensioners and *(d)* couple pensioners who will pay the community charge, broken down into (i) regions and (ii) local authority areas.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* The table shows domestic rates and community charges net of rebate in pounds per week, broken down into regions. The figures are based on data contained in the family expenditure survey and the illustrative community charges published on 23 June 1988. Analyses of individual local authority areas are not possible because of the limitations of the survey data.

1988-89 Rates and Community Charge net of rebate by region by tax-unit type (£ per week)

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	South East	South West	England
(a) One parent families[1]										
Rates (£)	2·61	3·78	3·30	3·39	4·16	3·77	4·96	5·98	3·69	4·22
Community charge (£)	2·08	2·46	2·07	2·25	1·94	1·75	3·70	2·47	2·05	2·42
Number (000's)	60	105	130	65	95	35	125	155	60	825
(b) Two parent families[2]										
Rates (£)	7·12	8·03	8·62	8·77	9·38	8·32	9·24	10·98	8·24	9·13
Community charge (£)	8·37	8·87	8·18	8·43	7·35	6·79	9·61	7·75	7·54	8·12
Number (000's)	350	580	665	455	605	210	495	1,200	450	5,010
(c) Single pensioners										
Rates (£)	3·45	3·40	3·56	3·49	4·00	3·63	4·43	4·91	3·70	3·95

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	South East	South West	England
Community charge (£)	2·52	2·43	2·26	2·17	2·01	1·98	3·21	2·46	2·25	2·41
Number (000's)	340	480	610	330	420	200	505	745	395	4,025
(d) Pensioner couples[3]										
Rates (£)	5·97	5·48	6·58	6·47	7·12	5·54	7·38	8·93	6·69	7·01
Community charge (£)	6·75	6·26	6·14	5·89	5·54	4·78	7·71	6·36	5·84	6·26
Number (000's)	165	275	265	190	225	95	245	465	200	2,130

[1] Single adults with dependent children.
[2] Married couples with dependent children.
[3] Married couples where husband is 65 or over.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish up-to-date poll tax figures to replace tables in Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government."

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax but I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 15 December at columns 725-6 to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) concerning the community charge.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been, in real terms, the housing investment programme allocation, showing, separately, money from the Housing Corporation, to the London borough of Tower Hamlets in each year since 1978-79; and when has been the actual housing expenditure achieved.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The available information is given below:

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
£ million (1987-88 prices)

	Housing investment programme allocation	Borough housing capital expenditure	Housing corporation[1]
1979-80	23·9	18·0	n/a
1980-81	18·6	21·8	n/a
1981-82	7·2	12·2	n/a
1982-83	13·2	8·4	n/a
1983-84	14·4	11·8	12·7
1984-85	14·2	13·0	11·2
1985-86	12·6	13·0	11·9
1986-87	18·3	29·0	10·9
1987-88	19·6	29·2	9·7

[1] Lending to housing associations in the Tower Hamlets area.
n/a not available.

Since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to supplement their allocations by expenditure financed from capital receipts. Nationally, over half of local authorities capital expenditure in 1988-89 is expected to be financed from capital receipts.

Football Clubs (Membership Scheme)

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessments have been made of the financial effects on smaller football clubs of the compulsory introduction of a pass for members, of the effect of such a scheme on violence in town centres and on the workload of local police forces.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* It is not possible to estimate the financial effects of the scheme until its details, particularly the technology to be employed, have been settled. But a company with considerable experience of membership schemes at individual clubs has said that with co-operation from the football authorities and proper marketing and management, the scheme could be set up and run at no cost to the clubs.

The scheme is an important element of the Government's efforts to break the link between football and hooliganism. As these take effect, I hope they will help to reduce all football-related violence both inside grounds and elsewhere, and consequent demands on the police service.

Water Authorities

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *427*, whether he will instruct the water authorities in England to provide details of the area of land owned by them which has been designated as *(a)* sites of special scientific interest, *(b)* national parks, and *(c)* areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* No. But I am considering whether additional information on these matters should be assembled and made available.

Football (Racism)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on measures being taken to counteract racism at football matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

The policing of football matches is a matter for the appropriate chief officers of police, whose unremitting efforts have brought about an improvement in overall crowd behaviour in the last three years. The police are committed to taking firm action against racially offensive behaviour wherever and whenever it occurs. Part III of the Public Order Act 1986 provided tough new powers against those whose behaviour is intended, or is likely, to stir up racial hatred. The football authorities and the clubs themselves also have a part to play in making it very clear that such behaviour will not be tolerated on their premises. The national membership scheme will provide them with an excellent opportunity for doing so.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

12. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding the introduction of the national core curriculum.

24. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the national curriculum.

54. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the national curriculum.

61. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the national school curriculum.

65. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales have recently published proposals for primary English and will shortly publish draft orders for mathematics and science. They have published interim reports from working groups on design and technology and Welsh. We are well on target for the implementation of statutory requirements from September 1989.

15. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the percentage of time proposed to be spent on science in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. MacDonald).

27. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now in a position to publish the quantity and type of teachers required to deliver the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

46. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now in a position to publish the quantity and type of teachers required to deliver the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Members to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley).

41. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further progress has been made with the working parties on the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The English working group has submitted its report on ages 5 to 11, which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales published on 15 November with their comments. It has been asked to report on ages 11 to 16 by 30 April 1989. Both the Welsh and the design and technology working groups have submitted interim reports, which were published on 9 and 24 November respectively. Their final reports are due by 30 April 1989.

Engineering Courses

13. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are currently taking engineering courses at universities in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: In 1987 there were 45,000 students studying engineering and technology at universities in the United Kingdom.

City Technology Colleges

14. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any further proposals for city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine).

77. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the number of applications he has received to sponsor city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: There has been an unprecedented response from industry to the CTC programme. Already over 100 firms have pledged over £31 million in sponsorship. Many more will come forward as CTCs are established. The original support for the Kingshurst CTC came from just two companies: it now has 64 companies providing financial and other support; and Nottingham, which will open next year, already has 27.

33. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any further proposals for city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) earlier this afternoon.

Private Schools

16. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions have been undertaken by his Department in regard to the maintenance of a statistical record of the costs of charitable status of private schools.

Mr. Butcher: None.

Parent Governors

18. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the percentage parent governors of primary and secondary schools who have a background of active professional teaching.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the occupational backgrounds of school governors is not collected centrally. The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 provides for parent governors to be elected by and from parents of registered pupils at the school. It is thus a matter for the whole parent body to decide who can best represent parents' interests on the governing body.

Inner London (Education)

19. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the inner London boroughs on the transfer of responsibilities to them from the Inner London education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I have met the leaders of the inner London councils, individually and collectively, several times this year, and are due to do so again tomorrow. We have been heartened by the positive approach which the boroughs are taking to their new education responsibilities.

Student Loans

20. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to introduce legislation during the current session to enact the proposals in his White Paper on student finance; and if he will make a statement.

52. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to introduce legislation during the current Session to enact the proposals in his White Paper on student finance; and if he will make a statement.

70. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he plans to introduce legislation to enact the proposals in his White Paper on student finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Legislation will be introduced in time to enable top-up loans to be introduced in the 1990-91 academic year.

22. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received, since his statement on student loans *(a)* in support of the Government's policy and *(b)* expressing opposition to Government policy.

78. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on his White Paper concerning student loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on his White Paper on student loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received about student grants and loans.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

23. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to transfer resources from the maintenance grant currently paid to students to the recurrent grant.

Mr. Jackson: No. On the illustrative assumptions in the White Paper "Top-up loans for Students", public expenditure on support for students' living costs will show a substantial increase from 1990 to the beginning of the next century.

80. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now withdraw his proposals for the introduction of student loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: No.

Applied Sciences

21. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is seeking any further initiatives to develop sixth-form and higher education skills in the applied sciences in 1989.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. I am satisfied that developments in hand—including the spread of advanced supplementary levels, the improvement of the vocational qualifications systems, and bridging courses for non-science A-level holders to enter scientific and technological degree courses —will contribute to improved numbers undertaking scientific and technological courses post-16. The engineering and technology programme and the manufacturing systems engineering programme will provide additional places in higher education in engineering and technology subjects.

Mathematics and Science Teachers

25. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the likely impact of any shortages of specialist trained teachers on mathematics and science in primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Most teaching in primary schools is by general class teachers. The Government are supporting in-service training through the LEA training grant scheme and the provision of advisory staff through education support grants to provide primary teachers with extra subject expertise and support in mathematics and science.

Nursery Teachers

26. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any plans to increase the number of nursery teachers; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any plans to increase the number of nursery teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam).

Scottish Universities

28. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the financing of Scottish universities.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I receive many representations bearing on the financing of Scottish universities.

57. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on

the financial deficits of each of the following universities: *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Heriot-Watt, *(c)* Strathclyde, *(d)* Glasgow, *(e)* Stirling, *(f)* Aberdeen, *(g)* Dundee and *(h)* St. Andrews.

Mr. Jackson: The University Grants Committee monitors the financial position of these and all other universities in the context of its administration of the restructuring programme which aims to help institutions achieve financial balance in sound academic shape by 1990-91.

Grant-maintained Schools

29. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have applied for grant-maintained status; and how many applications he expects to receive.

50. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have given an indication that they wish to apply to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have made inquiries as to the possibility of opting out of local authority control.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the progress in respect of opting out ballots under the Education Reform Act.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many requests for grant-maintained status have so far been received by his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have conducted ballots with a view to opting out of the local authority system and becoming grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools he expects to opt out of the maintained system in their first year of eligibility to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: A large number of parents and governors from schools of all kinds have made inquiries about grant-maintained status and about the formal procedures by which an individual school can seek to become grant-maintained. Four schools have already held secret postal ballots of parents which have shown large majorities in favour of making applications to my right hon. Friend, and he will consider these on their merits in due course. I expect a good many more to follow suit over the coming months.

Schools (Opting-out)

30. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when is the first school term in which he expects schools to be opted out.

Mr. Butcher: I expect the first schools to become grant-maintained in September 1989.

34. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools on the verge of closure have asked for opting out; and how many other schools of the state system of education have also applied.

Mr. Butcher: Schools for which my right hon. Friend has approved closures proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 are not eligible to apply for grant-maintained status. Schools which are currently subject to proposals under that Act may apply for grant-maintained status: in such cases my right hon. Friend will consider both sets of proposals together.

60. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has for the percentages of parents taking part in the ballots to decide whether or not schools should opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Butcher: The results of the four secret postal ballots on grant-maintained status held so far have shown a very high level of interest among the parents concerned. The percentage of parents of registered pupils voting in each ballot has been:

	Per cent.
Skegness Grammar School, Lincolnshire:	80
St. James's Church of England School, Farnworth:	83
Audenshaw High School for Boys, Tameside:	86
Wilson's School, Sutton:	76

Greenhouse Effect

31. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he has made for co-ordinating research on the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Jackson: The principal agencies funding relevant research on the global environment, namely, the Natural Environment Research Council, the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Meteorological Office, interact through channels including their Joint Climate Committee, the Robert Hooke Institute, and the United Kingdom Committee for the World Ocean Circulation Experiment. I understand that discussions are planned to further develop co-ordination in global environment research.

Schools (Organisation)

32. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the operation of the three-tier system of school organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has recently received correspondence from hon. Members, the Oxfordshire county council and the public concerning plans agreed by the Conservative group on the council to replace the present three-tier system of schools in Oxford with a two-tier one. Responsibility for formulating plans for school reorganisation rests with local education authorities and other proposers in the voluntary schools sector. My right hon. Friend's powers are limited to considering those statutory proposals submitted to him for consideration. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on this plan, other than to note that it has not yet been considered by the county council.

School Activities (Charging)

35. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 as it affects charging for school activities.

Mr. John Butcher: The Education Reform Act clarifies earlier legislation in establishing that schools may not charge for any provision offered during school hours, with the exception of individual music tuition. Charges may be made for activities provided outside school hours, unless these are required for a prescribed examination syllabus, or to fulfil statutory duties in connection with the national curriculum or religious education. Restrictions on charging do not prevent local authorities or schools from seeking voluntary contributions in support of any activity. Guidance on this aspect of the Act will issue in January 1989.

University Physics

37. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to meet the University Grants Committee to discuss the conclusions and recommendations of its "Review of the Future of University Physics".

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I have frequent meetings and exchanges with the chairman of the University Grants Committee on a variety of issues.

GCSE

38. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what conclusions his Department has drawn from the results of the GCSE examinations held this summer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This year's GCSE results support the findings by Her Majesty's inspectors of better teaching and learning in schools following the introduction of the new examination. The GCSE examining groups and the School Examinations and Assessment Council are reviewing syllabuses and procedures in order to make any necessary improvements for next year's courses and examinations.

45. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department will fund a study into the relationship between GCSE and staying on rates at 16 years of age.

48. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department will fund a study into the relationship between GCSE and staying on rates at 16 years of age.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department already monitors staying on rates, and is able with the help of advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate and other sources, to deduce causes of changes in such rates. In addition, the Department has been co-funding the youth cohort study, together with the Department of Employment and the Training Agency, which provides evidence from a large sample of 16-year-olds on the factors influencing their subsequent decisions and attainments. My right hon. Friend is at present considering the possible funding of a study of the cohort reaching the age of 16 in 1987-88, which includes the first GCSE award holders.

Higher Education

39. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department intends to announce further plans to broaden access to higher education; and if he will make a statement.

68. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department intends to announce further plans to broaden access to higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department intends to announce further plans to broaden access to higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The need for broader patterns of entry to higher education is widely recognised. The Government are assisting the process by funding a variety of related research projects. While actual recruitment is dependent on the policies and decisions of individual institutions, there has been an increase in the overall number of students of some 200,000 or 25 per cent. over the past decade.

Surplus School Places

40. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations from local education authorities about surplus places; and if he will make a statement.

63. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations from local education authorities about surplus places; and if he will make a statement.

67. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations from local education authorities about surplus places; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend receives such representations from time to time, usually in connection with statutory proposals for school reorganisation. He has also recently received a letter on this subject from the chairman of the education committee of the Association of County Councils.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

42. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made towards establishing new negotiating arrangements for school teachers' pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 11 November at column *318*.

City Technology College (Brent)

43. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any plans to open a city technology college in the London borough of Brent.

Mrs. Rumbold: The London borough of Brent is one of a number of London boroughs being considered with sponsors as a suitable area for the establishment of a city technology college.

Universities Funding Council

44. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet the chairman-designate of the Universities Funding Council; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I have had, and will continue to have, discussions with the chairman-designate of the Universities Funding Council on a range of matters.

HM Inspectors

47. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what role he intends for Her Majesty's inspectors in the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Her Majesty's inspectors will continue to assess educational standards and trends, and to advise me on the performance of the system at both institutional and national levels, in the light of all developments including the Education Reform Act.

School Meals

49. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the nutritional value of school meals in Bradford.

Mr. John Butcher: None.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a table showing how much expenditure on school meals has changed in cash and real terms each year between 1979 and the latest date available;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the average price of a school meal in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools for each year between 1979 and 1988 in current prices and 1988 prices.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 10 November at columns *253-54*.

Science Teaching

51. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to announce proposals on the implementation of the report on science teaching from the National Curriculum Council.

55. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to announce proposals on the implementation of the report on science teaching from the National Curriculum Council.

Mrs. Rumbold: The draft order for national curriculum science will be sent out very shortly to those to be consulted under the process of further consultation required by the Education Reform Act. It will be been drawn up in the light of the National Curriculum Council's advice.

Police and Schools

53. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the code of practice on police and schools produced by the police-school liaison group.

Mr. Butcher: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him on 15 December by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. Like my hon. Friend, I welcome the spirit of co-operation which the code of practice reflects.

Physics and Chemistry

56. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to strengthen the links between teaching and research in physics and chemistry throughout higher education.

Mr. Jackson: The first-stage reports of the University Grants Commitee's reviews of physics and chemistry in universities, which were issued for consultation on 28 October, both consider the principles of strengthening provision for teaching and research in these subjects. Generally, my right hon. Friend's letters of 31 October to the chairmen of the new higher education funding councils deal with the roles of both teaching and research in higher education.

Private Schools (Subsidies)

58. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to reduce the present level of subsidies by the taxpayer to the private school system.

Mr. Butcher: No, and I am pleased to say that the assisted places scheme which comes within my Department's expenditure programme is to be expanded to take in 52 more independent schools from September 1989.

Teachers

59. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will report on progress on his policy of attracting more teachers to the profession.

81. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to announce aimed at improving teacher recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to announce aimed at improving teacher recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

72. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Eduation and Science what proposals he has to attract more mature entrants to the teaching profession.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to announce aimed at improving teacher recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Our existing action programme on teacher recruitment includes special bursaries for trainee teachers, substantial local and national advertising and the establishment of the "Teaching as a Career" unit. Action is focused on tackling shortages in secondary subjects and in particular regions. We aim to recruit teachers from all sources including mature entrants. The programme is under continual review and we are prepared to take further action as necessary.

Mount Carmel School, Accrington

62. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about consolidating Mount Carmel high school, Accrington, on one site at Wordsworth road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The plans submitted by Lancashire LEA for capital building work at county and voluntary schools in 1989-90 included a project to consolidate Mount Carmel Roman Catholic high school on to one site. My right hon. Friend is at present considering these plans together with those from other LEAs and expects to make an announcement shortly.

Schools-Industry Links

64. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of Srtate for Education and Science if it is possible to estimate the number of secondary schools that maintain tangible links with local industry through inviting industrialists to speak to pupils or organising field trips to local industrial sites as part of the school curriculum.

Mr. Butcher: The information with which to estimate the number of secondary schools with these specific links is not available. However, on the basis of two surveys conducted in 1987 and 1988, it is possible to state that well over two thirds of secondary schools have regular links with local industry.

Schools (Capital Allocations)

66. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, what recent representations he has received relating to capital allocations for schools.

Mr. Butcher: All local education authorities in England have now submitted to the Department their capital expenditure plans for 1989-90 with supporting information. In addition, a number of school governors, diocesan bodies and hon. Members have made representations about capital allocations in support of individual LEAs and schools. I have also recently met several deputations to discuss capital allocations for schools.

Bradford CTC

69. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the estimated contribution from public funds towards the proposed city tecnnology college in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is currently undertaking a feasibility and cost study for Bradford CTC and discussions with sponsors are continuing. It would be premature to make a statement on figures for either capital or recurrent costs to the Department until both the study and discussions have been completed; but, as with all CTCs, the sponsors will be required to make a significant contribution to capital costs.

Homework

71. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is planning to give any advice to local education authorities about arrangements for pupils' homework; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government believe that appropriately set and marked homework valuably reinforces work in the classroom. We would encourage every local education authority to have a policy for homework as part of its policy for the curriculum as a whole. This should state clearly how parents can help their children to get most value out of homework and should offer guidance on the amount and character of homework which should be expected of pupils of different ages and abilities.

School Governors

73. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the take-up of school governor posts by representatives of local communities and businesses.

Mr. Butcher: The information available so far from local authorities suggests that most schools are successfully filling all the places on their governing bodies. In very many areas considerable interest has been shown by the local community, including business representatives. That is welcome.

Further Education Colleges

74. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to modify the arrangements for crediting short-term courses in further education colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: With the exception of non-advanced evening only courses and non-released part-time day courses, places provided by each local education authority on further education courses are taken into account in that authority's grant-related expenditure assessment for rate support grant purposes in accordance with returns made by the authority in the further education statistical record on 1 November each year. From 1989-90 onwards the grant-related expenditure assessment will also take account of certain part-time and non-degree courses of higher education provided by local education authorities in colleges which they maintain or assist.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

75. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the extension of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since the TVEI extension programme began in September 1987, nearly 70 education authorities in England, Wales and Scotland have started a preparatory or extension scheme; and nearly 40 more have applied to participate from September 1989. I am glad to say that every authority in Britain now has a TVEI pilot, preparatory or extension scheme.

Aberdeen University

76. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has had any discussions with the University Grants Committee or Universities Funding Council on the report into the finances of Aberdeen university jointly commissioned by the University Grants Committee or Universities Funding Council and Aberdeen university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The management consultants' report in question was commissioned by Aberdeen university and the University Grants Committee to offer an independent review of the university's financial situation and prospects. Its recommendations concern both planning and funding. They are rightly addressed to the university and the UGC, to which appropriate action now falls.

Speech Therapy

79. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the role of education authorities in the provision of speech therapy.

Mr. Butcher: An amendment to the Education Act 1981 which came into force on 1 November 1988 gives local education authorities the power to provide non-educational provision, including speech therapy, for children with statements of special educational need. It remains however the duty of the district health authority to provide speech therapy under the National Health Service Act 1977.

Women (Education)

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of women in full-time further education or Open University courses for each year since 1973.

Mr. Jackson: The readily available information is shown in the following table.

Women in higher education in Britain

Thousands

	Academic Year beginning in													
	1973	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Full-time															
Universities	77·7	82·5	87·7	92·5	97·1	102·2	107·3	112·4	115·4	115·7	115·0	116·0	118·4	121·8	125·2
Polytechnics and colleges	n.a	n.a	121·0	n.a	n.a	n.a	95·6	97·6	106·5	115·7	124·0	130·3	134·9	140·0	146·5
Part-time															
Universities	5·7	6·2	6·8	7·2	8·1	8·6	9·5	10·4	11·4	12·0	12·7	13·6	14·3	15·1	16·4
Open University	n.a	20·6	22·1	25·1	28·0	30·3	30·1	30·0	32·2	33·8	33·9	35·4	36·2	37·5	40·1
Polytechnics and colleges	n/a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	41·1	44·8	47·1	50·8	55·0	57·1	69·3	81·1	83·0

n.a = Not readily available

Higher Education (Derbyshire)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time students in higher education are in receipt of the following levels of grant from Derbyshire county council: *(a)* maximum grants, *(b)* minimum grants and *(c)* grants over the minimum and below the maximum levels presented in deciles.

Mr. Jackson: The available data are as follows:

Mandatory Awards (Derbyshire LEA) 1986-87

	Student numbers	*Percentage of award holders*
Full maintenance	[1]1931	31·5
Maintenance reduced by Assessment		
(i) Numbers of dependent students with Parental Contributions of:		
Under £200	457	7·5
£201-£400	438	7·2
£401-£600	381	6·2
£601-£800	345	5·6
£801-£1,000	286	4·7
£1,001-£1,200	250	4·1
£1,201-£1,400	233	3·8
£1,401-£1,600	144	2·4
£1,601-£1,800	138	2·3
£1,801-£2,000	89	1·5
over £2,001	55	0·9
(ii) Independent students	105	1·7
[2]Nil maintenance	[1]1,271	20·8

[1]Includes dependent and independent students.
[2]The minimum grant was abolished with effect from 1985-86. For these students only the course fees are paid.

Governors and Parents (Guidance)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to issue guidance to governors and parents of schools who have voted to become grant maintained but whose plans are hindered by the actions of the local education authority.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has issued a circular (10/88) on grant-maintained schools and has also published a booklet for school governors on how to apply for grant-maintained status for their school. We have no plans to issue further guidance but these documents give the names of officials in my Department who are ready to answer requests for advice from individual schools, governors and parents on particular questions of concern to them.

Top-up Loans (Mature Students)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column 7, what proposals he will institute to ensure that mature students of 50 years and over will be eligible for student top-up loans; and whether there is to be an upper-age limit for entitlement to student top-up loans.

Mr. Jackson: None. Like the student loan schemes of other countries, our top-up loans scheme will be subject to an age limit. We propose to restrict top-up loans to eligible students aged less than 50 at the start of their course. Students reaching that age after the start of their course will however be eligible to make fresh borrowings for the full length of it.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many non-industrial civil servants are in receipt of family credit; how many receive income support and how many receive housing benefit; and what is the total amount paid weekly to non-industrial civil servants for each of the above benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the average length of time taken to process applications for family credit; what is his assessment of the effect this has upon *(a)* the subsequent processing of housing benefit and *(b)* the accumulation of rent arrears; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For the average length of time taken to process claims for family credit, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 6 December at column *124*. Where a person receiving or claiming housing benefit has also claimed family credit, the calculation of his housing benefit will not be affected until family credit is actually received. The award will be treated as a normal change of circumstances, reducing housing benefit or eliminating it altogether depending on the amount by which the claimant's total net income including family credit exceeds his applicable amount. There should be no question of rent arrears arising from these arrangements.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate how many claims for family credit have *(a)* been received, *(b)* been determined and *(c)* resulted in an award.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: By 16 December 1988, 480,000 claims had been received. Of these, 434,000 had been determined, of which 299,000 had resulted in an award. In addition, 206,000 awards of family income supplement were converted to awards of family credit, without a claim being made.

Pensioners

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will benefit from the new scheme for pensioners announced in the House on 24 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pensioners on income support aged 75 and over, and disabled pensioners aged 60 and over, will benefit directly; those on housing benefit in these categories will also gain by up to the specified amounts.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the comparative value of pensioners' income and costs between countries in the European Community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available as the European Commission does not collect information as to the comparative value of pensioners' income and costs between countries in the European Community.

National Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give figures showing the rates of insured persons' national insurance contributions and employers' national insurance contributions which would be necessary in *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90 in order to maintain the level of finance of the National Insurance Fund in those years if the Treasury supplement were increased to its 1978-79 level as a proportion of all National Insurance Fund revenues.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1978-79 the Treasury supplement was 18 per cent. of gross contributions. The table shows the main rates of class 1 contributions required in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to maintain the estimated level of income in the national insurance fund published in the Government Actuary's report (Cm. 537) on the uprating and rerating orders, if the Treasury supplement were 18 per cent. in both years:

	Insured person (primary) *Per cent.*	*Employer (secondary)* *Per cent.*
1988-89	8·00	9·25
1989-90	7·75	9·00

Proportionate reductions in the class 1 lower band contribution rates and in contribution rates for the self-employed would also take place. The higher Treasury supplement would cost the taxpayer £5·25 billion in 1988-89 and £5·35 billion in 1989-90.

Durham Local Office

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the total benefits and allowances payable to Mr. Swainston, 3 Hawthorn park, Brandon, Durham on completion of phasing-in of the recent social security changes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have written to the hon. Member.

Investigators

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases the special board and lodging control staff team that has recently visited the Doncaster area has investigated; what were the results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A benefit fraud team is currently undertaking inquiries into board and lodging fraud in the Doncaster area and has so far investigated 184 cases. Fraud has been established in 36 cases.

Expenditure

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the current overspend or underspend on budgeted totals for each of his Department's regional offices in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available centrally. Overall, the manpower budget for all social security offices in Scotland in 1988-89 is £77,382,978 and the non-manpower budget is £14,014,711. As at 31 October 1988 the expenditure on these budgets was £45,707,913 and £6,014,237 respectively.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the net reduction in total housing benefit payable within each district council authority area in Scotland as a result of the changes to the housing benefit system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd As indicated in the reply given to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 14 November at column *446*, the information available has been placed in the Library.

Computerisation

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by Department of Social Security office how many microcomputers are held by each office at the latest available date; how many editions of software have been produced since the start of the social fund; and how many serious errors in the software have been identified.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The number of microcomputers held by each local social security office is shown in the table. Since April 1988, there have been two further editions each of income support and social fund software and one further edition each of casepaper location and direct payments software. A number of errors, of varying degrees of seriousness, have been found in the social fund software, many of these have already been corrected and all outstanding serious errors will be rectified in a further release of the software later this month.

Machines per office

Office	*Income support*	*Direct payments*	*Case paper location*	*Social Fund 'D' configuration*	*Social Fund 'F' configuration*	*Social Fund 'G' configuration*
Region: London North						
Acton ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Aylesbury ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Banbury ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Barking ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Barnet ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Basildon ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Bedford ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Braintree ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Bury St. Edmunds ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Cambridge ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Canning Town ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Chelmsford ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Clacton ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Colchester ILO	0	0	1	1	0	0
Cricklewood ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Diss AO	1	1	1	1	0	0
Dunstable ILO	3	0	0	1	0	0
Ealing ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Edgware ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Edmonton ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Euston ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Finsbury Park ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Grays ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Great Yarmouth ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hackney ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Harlesden ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Harlow ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hemel Hempstead ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Hendon ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hertford ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
High Wycombe ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Highgate ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hoxton ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Ilford ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Ipswich ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Kings Lynn ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Leytonstone ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Lowestoft ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Luton ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Milton Keynes ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Neasden ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Norwich Chantry ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Norwich Mountergate ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Notting Hill ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0

Office	Income support	Direct payments	Case paper location	Social Fund 'D' configuration	Social Fund 'F' configuration	Social Fund 'G' configuration
Oxford AO	10	1	1	0	1	0
Paddington ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Peterborough ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Plaistow ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Poplar ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Romford ILO	0	0	0	1	0	0
Shoreditch ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Southall ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Southend ILO	0	1	1	0	1	0
St. Albans ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Stepney AO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Stevenage ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Stoke Newington ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Thames North AO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Tottenham ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Uxbridge ILO	4	1	0	1	0	0
Watford ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Walthamstow ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Wood Green ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Woodgrange Park ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Region: London South						
Aldershot ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Andover ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Ashford ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Balham ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Basingstoke ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Battersea ILO	0	0	0	0	1	0
Bexley ILO	4	0	0	1	0	0
Bloomsbury ILO	0	1	1	1	0	0
Bognor Regis ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Bracknell ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Brighton ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Brixton ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Bromley ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Camberwell ILO	0	1	1	0	1	0
Canterbury ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
City ILO	2	1	0	1	0	0
Chatham ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Chelsea ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Chichester ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Crawley ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Croydon ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Crystal Palace ILO	0	1	1	0	1	0
Dartford ILO	0	0	0	1	0	0
Dover ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Eastbourne ILO	0	1	0	1	0	0
Eltham ILO	0	0	0	1	0	0
Epsom ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Fareham ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Folkstone ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Gravesend ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Greenwich Park ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Hithergreen ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Guildford ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hastings ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Havant ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hounslow ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Hove ILO	3	0	1	1	0	0
Oval AO	0	1	0	1	0	0
Kennington Park ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Kensington ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Kingston ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Lewes ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Lewisham ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
London South RNTU	4	4	4	4	1	0
Maidstone ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Mitcham ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
New Forest ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Newbury ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Isle of Wight ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Orpington ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Peckham ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Portsmouth North ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Portsmouth South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Reading ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Redhill ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0

Office	Income support	Direct payments	Case paper location	Social Fund 'D' configuration	Social Fund 'F' configuration	Social Fund 'G' configuration
Rochester AO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Sittingbourne ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Slough ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Southampton ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Southwark ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Streatham ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Surbiton AO	0	0	0	1	0	0
Sutton AO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Thames South AO	0	0	1	1	0	0
Thanet ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Tunbridge Wells ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Twickenham ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Wandsworth ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Westminster ILO	0	0	0	1	0	0
Wimbledon AO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Winchester ILO	3	0	1	1	0	0
Woking ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Woolwich ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Worthing ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Region: Midlands						
Birmingham:						
Bradford Street Ao	3	1	1	1	0	0
Edgebaston ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Erdington ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Handsworth ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Ladywood ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Northfield ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Perry Barr ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Ravenhurst ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
South Yardley ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Sparkhill ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Washwood Heath ILO	4	1	0	0	1	0
Boston ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Burton-on-Trent ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Cannock ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Chesterfield ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Corby ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Coventry East ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Coventry West ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Derby:						
Beckett Street ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Heritage Gate ILO	3	0	0	1	0	0
London Road ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Dudley North ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Dudley South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Grantham ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Hereford ILO	4	1	0	1	0	0
Ilkeston ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Kidderminster ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Leamington	4	1	1	1	0	0
Leicester:						
Burley's Way ILO	3	0	0	1	0	0
Lower Hill Street ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Norton Street ILO	4	0	0	0	1	0
Yeoman Street ILO	4	1	1	0	1	
Lichfield ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Lincoln:						
Newland ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Orchard Street ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Loughborough ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Mansfield ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Newcastle ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Northampton AO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Nottingham:						
Castlegate ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
David Lane ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Shakespeare Street ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Station Street ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Nuneaton ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Redditch ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Rugby ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Shrewsbury ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Skegness ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Smethwick ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Stafford ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0

Office	Income support	Direct payments	Case paper location	Social Fund 'D' configuration	Social Fund 'F' configuration	Social Fund 'G' configuration
Stoke North ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Stoke South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Sutton-in-Ashfield ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Telford ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Walsall East ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Walsall West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Wellingborough ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
West Bromwich ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Wolverhampton North ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Wolverhampton South ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Worcester ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Worksop ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Region: North East						
Ashington ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Barnsley East ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Barnsley West ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Berwick upon Tweed ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Bishop Auckland ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Blyth ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Bradford East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Bradford South ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Bradford West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Bridlington ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Castleford AO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Chester-le-Street ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Darlington ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Dewsbury ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Doncaster East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Doncaster West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Durham ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Eston ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Gateshead ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Goole ILO	2	0	1	1	0	0
Grimsby ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Halifax ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Harrogate ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Hartlepool ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hemsworth ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Hexham ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Houghton-le-Spring ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Huddersfield ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Hull East ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Hull West ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Jarrow AO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Keighley ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Leeds East ILO	6	0	1	0	1	0
Leeds North ILO	5	1	0	0	1	0
Leeds North West ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Leeds South ILO	6	1	1	1	0	0
Leeds West ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Middlesbrough ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
North East RNTU	4	4	4	4	1	0
Newcastle East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Newcastle St. James ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Newcastle West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
North Shields ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Northallerton ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Peterlee ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Pontefract ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Redcar ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Rotherham North ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Rotherham South ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Scarborough ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Scunthorpe ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Seaham ILO	1	1	1	1	0	0
Sheffield North East ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Sheffield North West ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Sheffield South East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Sheffield South West ILO	6	1	1	0	1	0
Skipton ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
South Shields ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Stanley ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Stockton ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Sunderland North ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Sunderland South ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Wakefield ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0

Office	Income support	Direct payments	Case paper location	Social Fund 'D' configuration	Social Fund 'F' configuration	Social Fund 'G' configuration
Wallsend ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Wath on Dearne AO	1	1	0	1	0	0
York ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Region: North West						
Accrington ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Ashton-under-Lyne ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Barrow-in-Furness ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Belle Vale ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Birkenhead North ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Birkenhead South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Blackburn ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Blackpool North ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Blackpool South ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Bolton ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Bootle ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Breckfield ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Burnley ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Bury ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Buxton ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Carlisle ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Chester ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Crewe ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Ellesmere port ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Farnworth ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Hyde ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Kendal ILO	2	1	0	1	0	0
Lancaster ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Leigh ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Liverpool:						
City ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Crosby ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Edge Hill ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Garston ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Huyton ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Kirkby ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Norris Green AO	2	1	1	1	0	0
West Derby AO	0	0	0	0	0	0
Macclesfield ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Manchester:						
Central ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Cheetham ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Chorlton ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Failsworth ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Longsight ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Middleton ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Openshaw ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Rusholme ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Sale ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Wythenshawe ILO	0	0	0	0	1	0
Northwich ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Oldham ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Penrith ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Preston North ILO	4	1	0	1	0	0
Preston South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Rochdale ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Rossendale ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Salford North ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Salford South ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Skelmersdale ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Southport ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
St. Helens ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Stockport North ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Stockport South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Toxteth ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Wallasey ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Warrington ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Whitehaven ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Widnes ILO	0	0	0	0	1	0
Wigan ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Wilmslow ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Workington ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Region: Wales and South West						
Aberdare ILO	2	0	0	1	0	0
Abertillery ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Aberystwyth ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0

Office	Income support	Direct payments	Case paper location	Social Fund 'D' configuration	Social Fund 'F' configuration	Social Fund 'G' configuration
Ammanford ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Anglesey Holyhead ILO	2	1	1	0	0	0
Anglesey Llangefni ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Bargoed ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Barnstaple ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Barry ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Bath ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Blackwood ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Bournemouth ILO	6	1	1	1	0	0
Bridgend ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Bridgewater ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Bristol Central ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Bristol East ILO	5	1	1	1	0	0
Bristol Horfield ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Bristol South ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Bristol West ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Caernarfon ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Caerphilly ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Cardiff Central ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Cardif East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Cardiff West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Carmarthen ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Cheltenham ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Chippenham ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Colwyn Bay ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Cwmbran ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Deeside ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Devonport ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Dolgellau ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Ebbw Vale ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Exeter ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Gloucester ILO	4	1	0	1	0	0
Haverfordwest ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Launceston ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Llanelli ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Morriston ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Neath ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Newport ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Newton ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Pembroke Dock ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Penzance ILO	0	0	0	1	0	0
Plymouth ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Pontypridd ILO	3	2	2	2	0	0
Poole ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Port Talbot ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Porth ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Porthmadog ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Rhondda West ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Rhyl ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Salisbury ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
St. Austell ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Stroud ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Swansea ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Swindon ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Taunton ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Torbay ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Trowbridge ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Truro ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Weston-Super-Mare ILO	4	1	0	1	0	0
Weymouth ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Wrexham ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Yeovil ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Region: Scotland						
Aberdeen North ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Aberdeen South ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Airdrie ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Arbroath ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Ayr ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Bathgate ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Bellshill ILO	2	1	1	0	1	0
Campbeltown ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Clydebank ILO	2	1	1	0	1	0
Coatbridge ILO	2	1	0	0	1	0
Cowdenbeath ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Cumbernauld ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0

Office	Income support	Direct payments	Case paper location	Social Fund 'D' configuration	Social Fund 'F' configuration	Social Fund 'G' configuration
Dumbarton ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Dumfries ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Dundee East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Dundee West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Dunfermline ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
East Kilbride ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Edinburgh City ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Edinburgh East ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Edinburgh North ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Edinburgh South ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Edinburgh West ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Elgin ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Falkirk ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Fort William ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Galashiels ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Glasgow:						
Anniesland ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Bridgeton ILO	2	1	1	0	1	0
City ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Craigton ILO	3	1	1	0	1	0
Cranstonhill AO	0	0	1	1	0	0
Laureston ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Maryhill ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Parkhead ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Partick AO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Provan ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Rutherglen ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Southside ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Springburn ILO	3	1	0	0	0	1
Greenock ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Hamilton ILO	4	1	1	0	0	1
Inverness ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Irvine ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Johnstone ILO	3	1	1	1	0	0
Kilmarnock	3	1	1	0	1	0
Kirkaldy ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Kirkwall ILO	2	0	0	0	0	0
Lerwick ILO	1	1	0	1	0	0
Leven ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Motherwell ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Oban ILO	1	1	1	1	0	0
Paisley ILO	5	1	1	0	1	0
Perth ILO	4	1	1	1	0	0
Peterhead ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Port Glasgow ILO	2	1	1	0	1	0
Rothesay OS	1	0	0	0	0	0
Stirling ILO	4	1	1	0	1	0
Stornaway ILO	2	1	1	1	0	0
Stranraer ILO	1	1	1	1	0	0
Wick ILO	1	1	1	1	0	0

Please note:
The social fund system has three alternative configurations:
'D' configuration comprises one microcomputer.
'F' configuration comprises two microcomputers.
'G' configuration comprises three microcomputers.

ENERGY

Electricity Supply (Voltage)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to require the United Kingdom electricity supply industry to fall into line with the proposed EEC-EFTA voltage supply change to 230 volts.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A technical committee of the international electrotechnical commission, a non-governmental body with membership extending well beyond the member countries of the EC and EFTA, has for many years been discussing the standardisation of electricity supply voltages amongst its members, and it is expected that national committees will be asked to adopt a standard of 230 volts for use in national standard specifications, which in the United Kingdom are set by the British Standards Institute. However, the supply voltage in Great Britain is set at 240 volts by virtue of a statutory instrument rather than a British standard specification. The Government have no present plans to recommend to Parliament a change in the voltage of supply.

Oil and Gas Platforms (Safety)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list by subject matter the 57 prosecutions of companies for breaches of health and safety law on offshore oil and gas platforms referred to in the answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *316*; and what fines were imposed for each of those which resulted in convictions.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A list of subject matter of the 57 prosecutions can only be obtained at disproportionate

cost. However, a register of convictions of companies for breaches of health and safety legislation on offshore installations is held in my department and is available for inspection. If the hon. Member wishes I shall make arrangements for him to come and inspect it.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Scab

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is investigating alternative measures of controlling sheep scab; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: 1988 marks the end of a five-year programme of twice annual national dipping. During the course of this year officials have been examining the arrangements for dealing with sheep scab in 1989 and beyond. A wide range of options has been considered, from total deregulation to maintaining the present arrangements. Before a decision is taken we intend to consult representatives of the sheep industry and local authorities, who have a key role in enforcement. A consultation document inviting comments will be issued very shortly.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to reduce the high concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls in cod and whiting caught in Swansea bay

Mr. Donald Thompson: The national monitoring programme of fish in English and Welsh waters conducted by scientists from my Department shows that concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyl in our fish including cod and whiting from Swansea bay, are low.

Agriculture Council

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council in Brussels on 19 and 20 December 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: With my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, I attended the meeting held on 19 and 20 December of the Council of Agricultural Ministers of the European Community, which was a continuation of the one held last week.

The Council continued to discuss a package of proposed measures dealing with the reform of the beef support arrangements; changes in green rates in the beef sector; a scheme of direct income aids to farmers; aid for small cereals producers; improvement of production and marketing of nuts; and the question of allocating milk quotas to farmers who had gone out of production under the Community's non-marketing of milk schemes at the time quotas were introduced, following a recent European Court decision. Arrangements for the continued support of New Zealand butter over the next four years and proposed amendments to the agreements governing New Zealand's exports of sheepmeat to the Community has also been part of the package.

Despite lengthy discussion, no agreement could be reached on any items in the package. The Council therefore, rolled forward until 5 March all those aspects of the beef arrangements which were due to end on 31 December, including the variable premium.

The Council also rolled forward for three months the import arrangements for New Zealand butter, which would otherwise have expired on 31 December, the permitted quantity for this period being one quarter of the quantity for 1988. It is clear that this and all the other items under consideration at the Council will have to be taken up again in the new year.

Eggs

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has considered the introduction of a scheme to encourage egg producers to leave the industry or reduce the size of their flocks.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the statement given yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Food at columns *21-22.*

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the results of tests by his Department's Microbiology Department on eggs produced by individual egg producers from England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I can confirm that the microbiology laboratories of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service have tested eggs for salmonella. Normal commercial practice requires ADAS to seek the specific agreement of its customers before disclosing the individual results of such tests, but representatives of the egg industry have agreed to the release of the information in the interests of informing the consumer. I can therefore report that to date ADAS has tested in excess of 4,000 eggs from approximately 150 producers. Salmonella species has not been detected in any of these eggs.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total number of eggs exported over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement outlining the support mechanism and protection available to egg producers.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statement that I made to the House on 19 December at columns 21-22 about the short-term measures to be introduced to help egg producers in the present critical period.

In the 12 months to October 1988, about 670,000 cases of eggs (each containing 360 eggs) were exported from the United Kingdom.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the role of the immobility of labour in perpetuating high levels of unemployment in many areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: My Department has sponsored research into the links between unemployment, real wages and mobility

of labour between regions. This research has been published. References are: Pissarides and Wadsworth: "Unemployment and the inter-regional mobility of labour" (CLE Discussion Paper No. 296); Jackman and Roper: "Structural Unemployment" (Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics, February 1987).

Unemployment has fallen by three quarters of a million since the last general election. It is falling in all regions of the country and has fallen furthest over the last year in the west midlands, the north west and Wales.

North-east Derbyshire

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to create employment in north-east Derbyshire.

Mr. Cope: My Department operates a wide range of employment, enterprise and training measures, and offers services in support of small firms and tourism, which are all available in north-east Derbyshire as elsewhere.

During the 12 months to November 1988, unemployment in the Derbyshire, North-East constituency fell by 673—14 per cent. of the November 1987 figure.

ITB Pension Fund

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to allow pensioners of the ITB pension fund's closed fund, to have their pensions paid into a building society account.

Mr. Nicholls: Approval for amending the ITB closed pension fund rules to allow pensions to be paid to approved building societies has recently been given. The pension fund's trustees were informed on 6 December 1988.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which Health and Safety Executive inspectors were needed to assist with the investigation of the Piper Alpha incident; what Health and Safety Executive scientific staff were involved; and what planned preventative work was delayed.

Mr. Nicholls: Health and Safety Executive inspectors who assisted with the investigation of the Piper Alpha incident were three principal and two 1B inspectors from the factory inspectorate, and three superintending specialist inspectors from the technology division. The scientific staff involved comprised of a senior principal specialist from the research and laboratory services division. Planned preventive work delayed was mainly inspection visits by the factory inspectorate.

Construction Blitz

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the number of enforcement notices and prosecutions undertaken by construction inspectors in the 12 months before the construction blitz, during the blitz and after the blitz.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's programme of blitzes on construction sites took place between 1 April 1987 and 30 September 1988. The number of prosecutions taken and enforcement notices issued against construction activities in the 12 months before the blitz, during the time the blitz was taking place and since the blitz ended is as follows:

Period	*Prosecutions taken*	*Enforcement notices issued*
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	375	1,063
1 April 1987—30 September 1988	[1]448	[1]4,521
1 October 1988—30 November 1988	[1]8	[1]141

[1] Provisional.

Note

These figures include action taken during each blitz as well as routine inspections of construction activities.

Factory and Agriculture Inspectorates

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used by the factory and agriculture inspectorates in deciding which reportable injuries should be investigated.

Mr. Nicholls: When selecting reported accidents for investigation, inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates consider the severity or potential severity of the injury, the gravity of any apparent breach of legislation, the need to give advice and guidance to the employer and the value of any information that would be obtained in preventing similar accidents.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits were made by the factory inspectorate specifically to investigate accidents and complaints in 1970, 1973, 1974 and 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

It is not possible to distinguish between visits paid by the factory inspectorate to investigate accidents and complaints and those paid for other reasons in the years specified.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits, other than in response to accidents and complaints, were made by the factory inspectorate in the years 1970, 1973, 1974 and 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

It is not possible to distinguish between visits paid by the factory inspectorate to investigate accidents and complaints and those paid for other reasons in the years specified.

Food and Environment Protection Act

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much time has been spent by Health and Safety Executive inspectors on the implementation of the Food and Environment Protection Act.

Mr. Nicholls: In the first year for which the Health and Safety Executive has been the enforcing authority, 1909·9 inspector days have been expended on work related to the Food and Environment Protection Act.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance on the interpretation and enforcement of the Food and Environment Protection Act and its regulations that is issued to the agricultural inspectorate.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The internal guidance is provided to assist HSE inspectors in their interpretation of the legislation and would be unsuitable for more general readers. A guidance note on the storage of pesticides and an introductory leaflet on the Act have been published and I have placed copies of these in the Library.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the work priorities which have been adjusted to accommodate Food and Environmental Protection Act work, referred to in his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *385*.

Mr. Nicholls: The only adjustments to the work priorities of the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorates to accommodate this work were an initial reduction in the number of planned inspections and a change in emphasis to concentrate more on pesticide aspects. However, the adoption of further efficiency measures did lead to an increase in the actual number of inspections undertaken during 1987-88.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will state the original target date for the completion of the inspection and certification of fire precautions at the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous work places.

Mr. Nicholls: The Fire Certificates (Special Premises) Regulations 1976 do not require the completion of inspection and certification work by any specific date and no original target date was set.

King's Cross Fire

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the Health and Safety Executive research budget the subsidy given by the Department of Transport for the scientific investigation into the causes of the King's Cross fire, represents.

Mr. Nicholls: The cost of the scientific investigation by the Health and Safety Executive was not subsidised by the Department of Transport. The whole cost was absorbed by the executive's research budget.

Accidents (Statistics)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the accident rates by company size for 1978, 1979, 1985, 1986, and 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The only information analysed by the Health and Safety Executive on the relationship between accident rates and company size concerns employees in manufacturing establishments in 1985. This was published in Health and Safety Statistics 1984-85. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will state the proportion of accidents in the construction industry in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1986 and 1987 of employed and self-employed workers.

Mr. Nicholls: The relative percentages of employees and self-employed in the construction industry who were reported as receiving fatal or major injuries are set out in the table. For the self-employed working on their own, fatal injuries (and for 1985 and earlier years major injuries) are not reportable and are therefore excluded.

Fatal and major injuries in the construction industry (SIC 80, division 5) reported to all enforcement authorities, including local authorities

	Percentage	
	Employees	*Self-employed*
1981	97	3
1982	97	3
1983	97	3
1984	96	4
1985	95	5
1986-87[1]	86	14
1987-88[1]	85	15

[1] Year commencing 1 April.

Notes:

(a) The definition of major injuries was introduced in the Notification of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR). The definition applies for 1981 to 1985. Subsequent figures are as defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR). The definition of a major injury is broader under RIDDOR than under NADOR and thus figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are not comparable with those for earlier years.

(b) Enforcing authorities responsible for enforcing the NADOR and RIDDOR Regulations are the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities.

(c) The relative percentages of injuries to employees and self-employed will be affected by their relative percentages in the workforce, also shown in the table, by differences in the range of activities in which they are engaged, and by differences in the propensity to report injuries.

Nursing Advisers

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment nursing advisers are employed by the Health and Safety Executive's medical division; and how many posts are currently unfilled.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 December 1988, 24 employment nursing advisers were employed in Health and Safety Executive's medical division and three full-time and four part-time posts were unfilled.

One successful candidate from a recent recruitment exercise has taken up an offer of employment, and offers to two further candidates will be made shortly. Further recruitment is planned.

Pesticides

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how long he estimates it will take for the Health and Safety Executive to process the 300 outstanding applications for approval on non-agricultural pesticides under the Control of Pesticides Regulation 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: The executive aims to process all outstanding applications before the end of 1989.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fixed work places he estimates are not registered with the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive does not keep estimates of the number of unregistered fixed work places.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms he expects will become aware of the Health and Safety Executive's leaflets "Don't Wait Until an Inspector Calls", "500 Dead", and "Essential For Small Firms"; and how many firms will not be aware of these leaflets as they are not registered.

Mr. Nicholls: It is impossible to estimate how many firms will have seen those leaflets, although over a millon copies have been distributed since 1986. The leaflets were in part aimed at encouraging a higher level of registration, and the number of premises registered with Her Majesty's factory inspectorate has increased steadily for the last three years.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive specialist inspectors are employed in each of the main specialist disciplines; and how many vacancies there are in each of those disciplines.

Mr. Nicholls: The information required is as follows (1 December 1988 figures):

Specialist disciplines	*Number of specialist inspectors*	*Number of vacancies*
Explosives	13	2
Construction engineering	20	9
Mechanical engineering	54	11
Chemical (including biotechnology)	86	9
Electrical engineering	22	4

Following a recent recruitment exercise it is expected that 16 specialists will join HSE. A further exercise is under way.

HEALTH

Community Care

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will implement the proposal in the Griffiths report in respect of closing long-stay hospitals, that no one should be discharged without a clear package of care, and without someone acting as care manager; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We are currently considering this and Sir Roy's other recommendations and will bring forward our own proposals in due course. General guidance on the development of community care services, including services for people discharged from long-stay hospitals, is already available in the planning guidelines circular HC(88)43.

North East Thames Health Authority

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will allocate additional resources to North East Thames regional health authority to deal with the consequences of having to treat patients at risk from the MRSA bacterium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is for health authorities to decide how to meet, from within the funds available to them, the cost of infection control in hospitals from whatever source, and the care and treatment of those infected.

Asbestosis

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the numbers in each of the last five years of *(a)* men and *(b)* women found to be suffering from asbestosis or bilateral diffuse pleural thickening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Comprehensive information about the numbers of sufferers from these diseases is not collected centrally. The estimated number of in-patient cases treated in NHS hospitals with a main diagnosis of asbestosis is given in the table.

England 1981-85

	Males	*Females*
1981	110	10
1982	80	20
1983	140	10
1984	150	30
1985	100	20

This information is based on a 10 per cent. sample of patient discharge records and because of the small numbers involved the results should be treated with caution. The annual report of the Health and Safety Executive in its tables of cases of occupational diseases awarded benefit includes figures on those suffering from asbestosis and bilateral pleural thickening. A copy of the report is in the Library of the House.

Action on Smoking and Health

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the current balance between the public and private funding of Action on Smoking and Health; and if he has any plans to encourage the organisation to increase its funding from private and voluntary sources;

(2) what is the cost to public funds of Action on Smoking and Health in the current financial year; and what grants he intends to make to it in 1989-90;

(3) what evaluation of the effectiveness of his Department's grant to Action on Smoking and Health there has been since such grants were made available.

Mr. Freeman: We expect that the total cost to public funds of support for Action on Smoking and Health in 1988-89 will be £230,000; this amount being a grant from the Department of Health under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968. Under a three-year agreement lasting until 1990-91 the section 64 grant in 1989-90 will be paid at the current level, with the possibility of an additional amount to reflect inflation, subject to the overall sum being a 1 per cent. reduction in real terms over the amount paid in 1988-89. The final grant level would be subject to agreement by Ministers. No other Government support is currently planned.

We wish to see ASH becoming less reliant on Government funding and this has been the subject of discussions with the organisation. Following these discussions ASH has set targets for increased fund raising which will lead to a reduction in the proportion of its funding which it receives from Government sources. ASH has received Government funding since 1971 and has grown into an effective adjunct to successive Governments' campaigns against smoking. Over that period the prevalence of regular cigarette smoking by adults in the United Kingdom has falledn from 46 per cent.

to 33 per cent. ASH's plans and achievements are reviewed yearly. It is currently expanding its activities in assisting employers design workplace smoking policies. This is an activity which the Government welcome and encourage. ASH has also developed an extremely useful database on smoking policy matters. I believe the Department gets very good value for the support it gives to ASH.

Anti-Smoking Campaigns

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the effectiveness of the Health Education Authority's campaigns against smoking.

Mr. Freeman: Each of the individual projects in the Health Education Authority's smoking programme is separately evaluated by the authority. Advertising against smoking takes place within the "Look After Your Heart" campaign and this is monitored through regular tracking studies. The authority's activity in connection with nationa' no smoking day is also monitored separately. This showed that in 1988, 92 per cent. of the population were aware of national no smoking day, with about 2·5 million smokers taking part. Follow-up to 1986 No Smoking Day suggests that up to 50,000 smokers may have given up permanently.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total expenditure by the Health Education Authority on anti-smoking campaigns in the current financial year; and what expenditure it intends to make on campaigns in this area in 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure by the Health Education Authority on anti-smoking campaigns in 1988-89 will be £1,334,000. No significant change of expenditure is intended for 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the Health Education Authority's budget is spent on anti-smoking campaigns in the current financial year; and how he expects this to change in 1989-80.

Mr. Freeman: The Health Education Authority plans to spend about 6 per cent. of its total budget in 1988-89 on anti-smoking campaigns. No change is proposed for 1989-90.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made to the effect of the increase in mortgage rates on the manning and financing of residential homes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether his Department has any evidence as to whether the loss of nurses' posts in registered residential homes is related to the financial difficulties imposed on the management of such homes as a result of recent increases in mortgage repayments.

Mr. Freeman: We do not have information available which would enable us to assess the effects on the operation of residential homes of changes in mortgage payments. Any nursing care required in residential care homes should be provided by the local community nursing service or under its supervision; these homes do not need to have nurses' posts.

NHS Professional and Technical Councils

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the professions, occupations and disciplines covered by each individual committee or pay review body linked to National Health Service professional and technical councils A and B;

(2) what were the annual percentage pay awards to the National Health Service staff covered by each individual committee or pay review body linked to professional and technical councils A and B in each year since 1981;

(3) how many National Health Service staff are covered by each individual committee or pay review body linked to professional and technical councils A and B;

(4) what is the starting, top and mid-point of each salary scale for National Health Service staff covered by each individual committee or pay review body linked to professional and technical councils A and B.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, but I do not believe that my departmental responsibilities are the crucial factor in determining the desirability of a national identity card. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December column *1080*.

Anti-smoking Campaign

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expenditure his Department makes on anti-smoking campaigns other than in grants to Action on Smoking and Health and the Health Education Authority in the current year; and what expenditure is planned in this area in 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: Other than money made available to the Health Education Authority and Action on Smoking and Health, the Department did not separately spend any money on specific anti-smoking campaigns in 1988-89 although the "Look After Your Heart" campaign did include a component of advice on giving up smoking. Consideration is currently being given to a campaign to discourage teenage smoking. The amount of expenditure this might involve has not yet been decided.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will reconsider his decision not to appoint to the Health Education Authority a fund raiser to encourage an increase in the organisation's income from non-governmental sources.

Mr. Freeman: Individual positions within the Health Education Authority are a matter for the authority itself. However, I understand that the authority has begun to

work with industry and other bodies to bring about increased opportunities to promote health education messages and during the past year has been successful in developing a number of commercial associations. The authority has recently appointed a commercial manager to develop these areas of co-operation further.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the budget of the Health Education Authority is funded from non-governmental sources.

Mr. Freeman: About 0·7 per cent. of the 1988-89 budget of the Health Education Authority is funded from non-governmental sources. These non-governmental funds are derived from the sale of publications and sponsorship. In 1988-89 this is likely to be about £160,000.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he estimates will be the cost to public funds of national no smoking day 1989.

Mr. Freeman: National no smoking day is financed from a number of public and voluntary sector and international sources. Public sector support from English sources for the 1989 event is limited to a grant from the Health Education Authority of £112,000.

Disabled People

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure that rights of representation and advocacy are being provided adequately for individuals whose cases are assessed under the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Mellor: It is good practice for the views of disabled people and their carers to be taken into account when local authorities are assessing the need for services. Sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 seek to give this statutory force through regulations covering the appointment and rights of authorised representatives to act on behalf of a disabled person. Six key sections of the Act are already in force, but sections 1 and 2 are among those still to be implemented. We have always said that the remaining sections of the Act will be implemented as and when the resources required have been identified and made available. Discussions are taking place with the local authority associations, who have indicated that they see these provisions of the Act as having resource implications.

Organ Transplants (Donor Cards)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will estimate the number of people whose organs are likely to be suitable for donation for transplant who are currently carrying donor cards;

(2) if he will estimate the number of people who have died in hospital whose organs would have been suitable for transplant but where no donation was made during the last five years; and if he will list the principal reasons for such action not being taken.

Mr. Freeman: The basic information required to form reliable estimates of the number of potential organ donors is not yet available. On 1 January 1989, health authorities in England will begin a survey which should provide a clearer picture of the total potential and the reasons why donation sometimes does not take place. For further details of this initiative, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 13 December 1988 at column *555*.

Different sample surveys produce varying estimates of donor card ownership, but it appears likely that between 20 and 30 per cent. of the general public posess a donor card.

Meningitis

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths due to meningitis have been recorded in each of the past five years.

Mr. Freeman: Meningitis may be caused by many different organisms. I assume that my hon. Friend is interested particularly in meningococcal meningitis, and the table gives the number of deaths from this cause.

Number of deaths registered with underlying cause assigned as meningococcal meningitis (ICD(9)[1] 036.0). Persons, all ages England and Wales between 1983 and 1988

Year	*Number of deaths*
1983	20
1984	26
1985	36
1986	44
1987	37
[2]1988	21

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
[2] Provisional, January to June only.
Note: Due to a change in the coding rules, deaths prior to 1984 may not strictly be comparable with those of later years.
Figures from 1986 exclude deaths at ages under 28 days.

Food (Nutrition Implications)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance the Ministry has issued, or proposed to issue on the health implications of the consumption of *(a)* red meat, *(b)* poultry and turkeys, *(c)* nitrate fertilised vegetables, *(d)* fruits subject to pesticide treatment, *(e)* dairy products, *(f)* white bread and *(g)* sugar-based products.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to issue special guidance on the nutrition implications of eating the foods mentioned. Any foods, if eaten in moderation, can contribute to a healthy diet. It is the balance of the diet as a whole which matters. However it is noteworthy that in its report "Nutritional Aspects of Bread and Flour" (HMSO 1981), the chief medical officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy recommended that

"the consumption of bread, whether white, brown or wholemeal, should be promoted".

We expect to publish a COMA report on dietary sugars in the course of 1989.

With regard to the safety of particular foodstuffs, whether in relation to the use of fertilisers or pesticides in their production, or to any other factor, we shall continue to advise the public whenever necessary.

Abortions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were carried out in the latest year for which figures are available at 28 weeks, 27, 26, 25, 24, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19 and 18 weeks.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table.

Number of terminations performed by week of gestation England and Wales 1987

Gestation week	*Number*
18	2,600
19	1,725
20	1,363
21	890
22	905
23	903
24	107
25	11
26	9
27	3
28	1

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown by age, including girls aged under 16 years, of the numbers and percentages of abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available on pregnancies of 18 weeks or over, and indicate the statutory grounds on which the abortions were performed.

Mr. Freeman: *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The information is shown in the table.

Notifications of abortions at 18 weeks and over gestation by age of women and statutory grounds for residents and non-residents.

Numbers and percentages. *England and Wales. 1987 (provisional)*

Residents and non-residents	*Total*		*Under 16*		*16-19*		*20-24*		*25-34*		*35-44*		*45 and over*		*Unknown*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Statutory grounds																
All	8,717	100·0	437	5·0	2,711	31·1	2,887	33·1	1,942	22·3	712	8·2	27	0·3	1	0·01
1 (with any other)	27	–	2	–	2	–	9	–	11	–	3	–	–	–	–	–
2 (alone)	7,691	–	429	–	2,599	–	2,600	–	1,537	–	504	–	22	–	–	–
3 (with or without 2)	380	–	3	–	52	–	129	–	145	–	49	–	1	–	1	–
4 (alone)	556	–	3	–	51	–	134	–	227	–	138	–	3	–	–	–
4 (with any other except 1, excluding 4 alone)	63	–	–	–	7	–	15	–	22	–	18	–	1	–	–	–
5 or 6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Statutory grounds: Certified by two registered medical practitioners as necessary on any of the grounds:

1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

Certified by the operating practitioner as immediately necessary:

5. In emergency, to save the life of the pregnant woman.
6. In emergency, to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and how many and what percentage of these abortions were performed at 18 weeks or more gestation;

(2) how many and what percentage of the abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available in pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation were performed *(a)* in the private sector, *(b)* in the National Health Service or *(c)* by the National Health Service in the private sector under agency arrangements;

(3) how many and what percentage of the abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available on pregnancies of 18 weeks or over were performed upon *(a)* women normally resident in the United Kingdom and *(b)* women from overseas;

(4) how many and what percentage of the abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available on pregnancies of 18 weeks or over were performed under each statutory ground;

(5) if he will give a breakdown by *(a)* numbers of previous children and *(b)* numbers of previous abortions of the numbers and percentages of abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available at 18 weeks or more gestation;

(6) how many and what percentage of abortions in the latest year for which figures are available were performed in England and Wales upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation because *(a)* the child was likely to be born handicapped or *(b)* the pregnancy had arisen as a result of rape;

(7) how many and what percentage of all abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation were performed under ground 2 of the Abortion Act.

Mr. Freeman: *[holding answer 13 December]:* The information is given in the table. Statutory ground four gives the number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 where there is substantial risk that if the child were to be born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped. Rape is not in itself a statutory ground for abortion, but arrangements have been made to identify separately those notification forms which mention rape. Other abortions may have been performed where rape may have occurred, but we cannot identify these in the statistics.

Notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967, all gestations; 18 completed weeks and over by category of premises, area of usual residence, statutory grounds, number of previous live and still born children, number of previous abortions under the Act, with mention of rape on notification form. Residents and non-residents of England and Wales. England and Wales 1987 (provisional)

Notifications of Abortions

	Total residents and non-residents	
	Number	*Per cent.*
Gestation (completed weeks)		
All	174,276	100·0
18 and over	8,717	5·0
Gestation 18 completed weeks and over Category of premises		
All	8,717	100·0
NHS	1,235	14·2
Non-NHS	7,482	85·8
of which Agency	437	5·0
Area of usual residence		
United Kingdom	5,476	62·8
Elsewhere	3,241	37·2
Statutory grounds		
1 (with any other)	27	0·3
2 (alone)	7,691	88·2
3 (with/without 2)	380	4·4
4 (alone)	556	6·4
4 (with any other, ex 1, 4 alone)	63	0·7
5 or 6	—	—
Number of previous live or still born children		
0	6,023	69·1
1	1,288	14·8
2	801	9·2
3	351	4·0
4 and over	200	2·3
Not stated	54	0·6
Number of previous abortions under the Act		
0	7,426	85·2
1	1,078	12·4
2	125	1·4
3	24	0·3
4 and over	10	0·1
Not stated	54	0·6
Mention of rape on notification form	1	0·0

Statutory grounds.
Certified by two registered medical practitioners as necessary on any of the grounds:
1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant women greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
Certified by the operating practitioner as immediately necessary:
5. In emergency, to save the life of the pregnant women.
6. In emergency, to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant women.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions have so far been performed in England and Wales under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 December]:* The total number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 received by the end of August 1988 for terminations performed in England and Wales from 27 April 1968 to 30 June 1988 is 2,899,405. A small number of notifications received after statistics have been compiled for each year are excluded.

Doctors (Discipline)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors have been *(a)* struck off, *(b)* suspended and *(c)* disciplined in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The General Medical Council has supplied the following figures:

	Registrations erased (a)	*Registrations suspended (b)*	*Total*[1] *(c)*
1987	7	11	53
1986	6	12	49
1985	13	8	45
1984	10	10	52
1983	10	9	36
1982	5	6	30
1981	5	9	26
1980	5	10	23
1979	7	7	30
1978	4	6	28

[1] Total number of cases considered by the General Medical Council professional conduct committee (formerly the disciplinary committee).

I understand that the General Medical Council would be willing to provide a more detailed breakdown of the result of disciplinary proceedings heard by the professional conduct committee (column *(c)*) if my hon. Friend wishes to write to it.

Orthoptists (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many orthoptists thre are in the Nottingham district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may care to write to the chairman of Nottingham health authority for the information.

Abortion (Tower Hamlets)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of abortions in Tower Hamlets' health authority by method for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics relating to legal abortions by district health authority of termination are not published in order to maintain confidentiality.

Medical Accidents

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the working party between his Department and the British Medical Association on alternative forms of compensation for victims of medical accidents was set up; how many times it has met; and when he expects it to report.

Mr. Mellor: No working party to consider alternative forms of compensation for victims of medical accidents has been set up between the Department and the British Medical Association.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now update his estimate contained in his answer of 16 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *433*, of the proportion of people infected with HIV who will go on to develop AIDS in the light of the Cox report on HIV infection.

Mr. Mellor: We accept the statement in the Cox report that

"The proportion of people infected with HIV who will eventually develop AIDS is uncertain. Some of the recent evidence suggests it is higher than originally thought and may be as high as 80 per cent., or even greater".

The previous reply of 16 November 1987 was in respect of people with haemophilia and HIV infection. It is still not known what proportion of these people with HIV infection will develop AIDS.

Eggs

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of eggs sampled (i) between 1 January and 31 October and (ii) since 31 October; and what were the results regarding the incidence of salmonella enteriditis.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Preliminary information collected by the public health laboratory service in 1988 showed that in an examination of about 2,000 eggs from sources suspected of being associated with salmonella food poisoning, salmonella enteritidis PT4 was cultured from the shells of only seven eggs; from the content only of two eggs and from both shell and contents of two eggs. Because these eggs were selected from suspect flocks they are not representative and no inference can be drawn from these findings about the extent of salmonella contamination of eggs in this country.

In addition, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service have examined eggs for a number of individual producers on a contractual basis. Individual results are commercially confidential. However, in total around 4,000 eggs were examined to date without any positive results for salmonella.

Births and Deaths (Registration)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken in the light of the Register General's inquiries into the application of the legislation governing the registration of births and deaths to the case of the Carlisle baby; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. I have no powers in this respect.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list his responsibilities under the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953, and for action in respect of non-compliance with the terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953.

Mr. Freeman: The Home Secretary has no responsibilities under the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health's responsibilities under the Act are confined to approving regulations made by the Registrar General prescribing anything which by that Act is required to be prescribed.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he has received a report from the Registrar General into application of the Births and Deaths Registration Act in the case of the Carlisle baby.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Infant Feeding

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the guidelines on infant feeding based on the health report entitled "Present Day Practice in Infant Feeding: Third Report from the Chief Medical Officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy".

Mr. Freeman: This was published on 19 December and is available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office (ISBN 0 11 321181 3).

Unemployment (Mortality)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why it was decided to exclude the table linking unemployment to mortality from the 1986 "Social Trends", published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 25 November 1988]:* No such table was proposed for "Social Trends" 16 by the Central Statistical Office, which edits this publication.

Operations (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Robert McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the numbers of people on waiting lists for hip operations, kidney transplants, eye operations, varicose vein operations, cosmetic surgery, heart operations and heart and lung transplants in England and Wales, at the latest time for which statistics are available; what was the comparable figure for the same period last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 November 1988]:* We collect waiting list information centrally by specialty rather than by type of operation. This is available in the Library. However, separate figures for patients waiting for kidney, heart or combined heart and lung transplants are notified to the United Kingdom transplant service, for the United Kingdom as a whole. This information is provided in the table.

Questions about waiting lists in Wales are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Patients waiting for Transplants in the United Kingdom

	25 November 1987	*25 November 1988*
Kidney	3,271	3,491
Heart or heart/lung	338	396

The number of transplants of these organs carried out from 1 January to 25 November 1988 is approximately 9 per cent. higher than in the comparable period in 1987.

Diet

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice his Department issues on the eating of *(a)* chips and *(b)* eggs and as to whether they constitute part of a healthy diet.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 December]:* Any food, in moderation, can constitute part of a healthy diet. It is the balance that matters. The Department issues no specific nutritional advice about chips and eggs. However, chips may contribute substantially to dietary fat. The Chief Medical Officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy advise, and we accept, that consumption of fat by the population as a whole should be reduced.

With regard to the risk of salmonella and eggs I refer the hon. Member to the statement made to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State, on 5 December at column *19*.

Smoking

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of deaths from lung cancer he attributes to smoking; and how many such deaths occurred in people under 65 years, and in all age groups, in the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* It is not possible to be precise, but it is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of deaths from cancer of the lung is attributable to smoking[1]. The table gives the remaining information requested. The death rate for all males is falling, whilst that for all females is rising.

Number of deaths with underlying cause as malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung (ICD[0] 8, 9 162) at ages under 65 years and at all ages—England and Wales 1978-1987.

Year	*Number of deaths*	
	Under 65 years	*All ages*
1978	11,847	34,348
1979	11,701	34,760
1980	11,355	35,168
1981	11,132	34,727
1982	10,957	34,832
1983	11,021	35,572
[2]1984	11,070	35,739
1985	10,665	35,792
[3]1986	10,094	35,257
1987	9,549	35,138

[1] International Classification of Diseases 8th and 9th revisions.
[2] Due to a change in coding rules, deaths prior to 1984 are not strictly comparable with those of later years.
[3] Statistics for 1986 and 1987 exclude deaths at age under 28 days.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of acute beds in National Health Service hospitals and the total number of in-paitent bed days per annum he estimates are used by patients who are suffering from smoking-induced illnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The available information for the main diseases associated with smoking is given in the table. Not all illness from these diseases is attributable to smoking. In particular, smoking is only one of a number of causes of ischaemic heart disease.

Estimated average daily number of occupied beds and total in-patient days, by selected diagnoses, NHS acute sector, England 1985

Main diagnosis	*ICD*[1]	*Average number of beds occupied daily*[2]	*Total in-patient days (thousands)*
Malignant Neoplasm of:			
Trachea, Bronchus and Lung	162	1,765	644·2
Lip, Oral cavity and Pharynx	140-149	271	98·9
Oesophagus	150	344	125·6
Larynx	161	160	58·4
Diseases of Circulatory system:			
Ischaemic heart disease	410-414	5,511	2,011·5
Chronic Pulmonory heart disease	416	91	33·2
Aortic Aneurysm	441	213	77·7
Diseases of the Respiratory system:			
Bronchitis and Emphysema	490-492	916	334·3
Chronic Airways Obstruction (not elsewhere classified)	496	1,572	573·8
All diseases listed above		10,843	3,957·7
All acute specialties		100,659	36,740·5
Smoking related diagnoses as a percentage of total	—	10·8	10·8

Notes:
[1] International classification of diseases, ninth revision.
[2] Based on the hospital in-patient inquiry and SH3 1985.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the percentage of out-patients at chest clinics who attend as a result of smoking-induced illnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 December]:* We do not collect centrally diagnostic out-patient information.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many amputations are carried out each year as a result of peripheral vascular disease caused by smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The publication, "Amputation Statistics for England, Wales and Northern Ireland 1987", a copy of which is in the Library, contains figures on the number of amputations of

various limbs as a result of several forms of vascular insufficiency, but we do not collect centrally information on whether or not the amputee smoked.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the National Health Service of smoking-related diseases for the last year for which figures were available.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 10 March at columns *339-340*.

Leicestershire Health Authority

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will direct the Leicestershire health authority to provide specific and detailed answers forthwith to the Leicestershire community health council and to the "Maternity Unit Must Stay" campaign to the 14 questions of fact set out in the letter to the chairman of the Leicestershire health authority from Mrs. Jane Daw of Wing, Rutland, to which the chairman replied briefly on 10 November declining to provide the information; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Health authorities are required to provide information to community health councils to enable them to carry out their statutory duties. I understand that Leicestershire community health council has not formally sought the information referred to. It would therefore not be right for me to intervene in the way proposed.

Regional Health Authorities (Statutory Duties)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to regional health authorities regarding the need for district health authorities to provide community health councils with full information to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties of keeping under review the operation of the National Health Service; how he monitors the performance of district health authorities in that regard; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* We have placed a legal requirement on district health authorities (currently regulation 20 of the Community Health Council Regulations 1985; S.I. 1985, No. 304) to provide CHCs with such information about the planning and operation of health services in their district as they may reasonably require in order to carry out their duties. The regulation also provides for a right of appeal to the relevant regional health authority in case of difficulty. Although we have not instituted any specific monitoring arrangements for this regulation we have not received representations suggesting there is any general problem with its operation.

Benzodiazepines

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions for benzodiazepines were dispensed by community pharmacists in each of the years 1983 to 1986.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* This is the information:

millions

	Number of prescriptions
1983	28·7
1984	28·0
1985	25·7
1986	25·4

Eggs (Salmonella)

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to whether any producers involved in outbreaks of salmonella attributed by him to eggs test their eggs for salmonella and have found them free from infection.

Mr. Clarke *[holding answer 19 December]:* Because of the probably very low number of eggs infected out of the total production of even an infected flock, a manageable sampling and testing regime in eggs from flocks is unlikely to detect the presence of infection. For example, if only one in 10,000 eggs were infected that would constitute a health risk but no sampling method would be likely to detect that level of infection. Safety cannot be assured by sampling therefore and no flock could be declared salmonella-free unless a large proportion of its output was tested.

Radiation (Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make funds available to pay compensation to patients damaged by excess radiation at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Health authorities are expected to meet such expenditure from within their own resources.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Eggs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many eggs have been consumed in the House of Commons Refreshment Department and in what form in *(a)* the last year for which statistics are available and *(b)* the last two weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Irving: I have been asked to reply.

During the last 12-month period for which figures are available at least 280,000 eggs were used by the Refreshment Department either in the preparation of recipes, or for direct consumption. The Refreshment Department has also recently acquired a supply of liquid pasteurised eggs. In the last two weeks some 14,000 eggs and 4 gallons of liquid eggs have been consumed.

Select Committees

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list in the *Official Report* the reports of departmental Select Committees in respect of which *(a)* evidence has been received from the Scottish Office and *(b)* recommendations have been made regarding matters within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland, in each Session since 1982-83.

Mr. Wakeham *[holding answer 19 December 1988]*: The following is the information requested:

Departmentally-related Select Committee	*(a) Evidence received from Scottish Office*	*(b) Recommendations made regarding matters with the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland*
Agriculture	First Report of Session 1982-83, *Organisation and Financing of Agricultural Research and Development*, HC 38.	Second Report of Session 1983-84, *The Effect of Feedstuff Prices on the United Kingdom Pig and Poultry Industries*, HC 539.
	Second Report of Session 1983-84, *The Effect of Feedstuff Prices on the United Kingdom Pig and Poultry Industries*, HC 539.	Sixth Report of Session 1984-85, *The United Kingdom Government Agricultural Development and Advisory Services including lower input farming*, HC 502.
	Sixth Report of Session 1984-85, *The United Kingdom Government Agricultural Development and Advisory Services including lower input farming*, HC 502	Second Report of Session 1987-88, *Chernobyl: The Government's Reaction*, HC456.
	Second Report of Session 1987-88, *Chernobyl: The Government's Reaction*, HC 456.	
	Session 1988-89, *Land-Use and Forestry* (inquiry in progress).	
Education, Science and Arts	First Report of Session 1986-87, *Students Awards*, HC 28.	
	Fourth Report of Session 1986-87, *DES Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90*, HC 240.	
Energy	Third Report of Session 1986-87, *The Effect of Oil and Gas Prices on Activity in the North Sea*, HC 175.	Third Report of Session 1986-87, *The Effect of Oil and Gas Prices on Activity in the North Sea*, HC 175.
	Third Report of Session 1987-88, *The Structure, Regulation, and Economic Consequences of Electricity Supply in the Private Sector*, HC 307.	Third Report of Session 1987-88, *The Structure, Regulation, and Economic Consequences of Electricity Supply in the Private Sector*, HC 307.
Environment	Fourth Report of Session 1983-84, *Acid Rain*, HC 446.	
	Fifth Report of Session 1985-86, *Planning: Appeals, Call-in, and Major Public Inquiries*, HC 181.	
Home Affairs	First Report of Session 1984-85, *Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime*, HC 43.	Second Report of Session 1984-85, *Chinese Community in Britain*, HC 102.
	Second Report of Session 1984-85, *Chinese Community in Britain*, HC 102.	
	First Report, Session 1987-88, *Bangladeshis in Britain*, HC 96.	
Social Services	Fourth Report of Session 1984-85, *Misuse of Drugs*, HC 208	Third Report of Session 1986-87, *Problems Associated with AIDS*, HC 182.
	Third Report of Session 1985-86, *Prison Medical Service*, HC 72.	
	Third Report of Session 1986-87, *Problems Associated with AIDS*, HC 182.	
Trade and Industry	First Report of Session 1985-86, *Tourism in the United Kingdom*, HC 106.	
Transport Committee	Second Report of Session 1983-84, *The Organisation, Financing and Control of Airports in the United Kingdom*, HC 319.	
	First Report of Session 1984-85, *Road Safety*, HC 103.	
	Second Report of Session 1985-86, *Tolled Crossings*, HC 250.	
	Third Report of Session 1986-87, *Financing of Rail Services*, HC 383.	
	Session 1988-89, *Roads for the Future*, (inquiry in progress).	
Treasury and Civil Service	Eighth Report of Session 1987-88, *Civil Service Management Reform: the Next Steps*, HC 494.	
Welsh Affairs	First Report of Session 1982-83, *Water in Wales*, HC 229.	
	First Report of Session 1983-84, *The Impact of Regional Industrial Policy on Wales*, HC 427.	

In addition, the *Scottish Affairs Committee* made nine reports in Sessions 1982-83 to 1986-87, inclusive, all of which related to the expenditure, administration or policy of the Scottish Office.

DEFENCE

Conventional Forces

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the balance of conventional forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The most recent assessment of the balance of conventional forces in Europe is given in the NATO document "Conventional Forces in Europe: the Facts", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. This confirms that the Warsaw pact currently enjoys numerical superiorities over the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of about 3:1 in tanks and artillery and 2:1 in combat aircraft.

US Defence Secretary

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of Defence on the future development of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Sainsbury: None recently, but there have been a number of ministerial and senior official contacts with the United States Department of Defence in recent months on various aspects of the SDI programme.

Food Distribution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has considered using members of the armed forces stationed in Britain to assist charities in distributing the free Common Market food to the needy; and whether he has assessed whether this could be a useful training exercise should a similar procedure need to be undertaken during a wartime or national crisis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. This form of assistance would not meet the criteria laid down in the well-established military aid to the civil community scheme, under which in certain circumstances military aid may be provided to civil agencies. This is primarily because there would be no training benefit, since we would not

envisage using service men in this way during wartime, and it is not our practice to train service men specifically for disaster relief.

Submarine Exercises

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names and dates of bilateral US Navy-Royal Navy submarine and anti-submarine exercises held since 1981.

Mr. Hamilton: Aside from NATO exercises, the Royal Navy and United States Navy take part in a number of exercises held under national auspices each year, to which other allies are frequently also invited. Details of these exercises in the form requested are classified. In addition, ships and submarines of both navies take part in passage exercises whenever the opportunity arises. These are arranged locally by the vessels involved and information on them is not held centrally.

Satellites

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the cost and purpose of the satellite launched on an Ariane rocket on 11 December.

Mr. Sainsbury: The satellite was Skynet 4B, the first in a planned series of three military communications satellites. The estimated cost of the programme is £360 million at average 1987-88 outturn prices, including launch and ground support costs.

Force and Arms Reductions

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans for discussions with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Warsaw pact on asymmetrical force and arms reductions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is likely that new negotiations on conventional forces in Europe involving the 23 NATO and Warsaw pact countries will begin soon; there will be a need for heavily asymmetrical reductions in key weapons systems by the countries of the Warsaw pact to redress current imbalances. The global ban on chemical weapons already under negotiation in the conference on disarmament will also require far greater reductions by the Warsaw pact countries than the countries of NATO.

INF Aircraft

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what trends have been observed in the numbers of Warsaw pact shorter-range INF aircraft in Europe over the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to figure 1 on page 3 of Volume 1 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988, Cm. 344-I. We have not noted any significant changes in the number of SRINF aircraft over the last two years, although the process of replacing the more elderly SRINF aircraft with the modern Fencer and Fulcrum has continued.

Offensive Air Power

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the inclusion of discussions about offensive air power in the conventional stability talks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom is not opposed in principle to the inclusion in the conventional stability talks of any of the conventional capabilities of forces in the Atlantic to Urals area. However, NATO's proposals will concentrate on those land forces, such as armour and artillery, with the capacity to seize and hold territory, which represents the core of an offensive capability.

Nimrod Fleet

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his practice to answer questions on deployment of the Royal Air Force Nimrod fleet.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Emergency Diversion Airfield

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate has been made of the cost of transferring the military emergency diversion airfield facility for RAF Lossiemouth to RAF Kinloss.

Mr. Neubert: It is estimated that the transfer of military emergency diversion airfield (MEDA) responsibility from RAF Lossiemouth to RAF Kinloss will result in a net saving of some £3 million over 10 years.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of fitting rotary hydraulic arrester gear at an emergency diversion airfield.

Mr. Neubert: The cost of installing rotary hydraulic arrester gear (RHAG) varies from site to site dependent upon the works services required. It is estimated that the cost of installing rotary hydraulic arrester gear (RHAG) at RAF Kinloss will be some £400,000.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate has been made of likely civilian job losses at RAF Lossiemouth when its military emergency diversion airfield facility is transferred to RAF Kinloss; and what will be the total cost of paying voluntary redundancy payments.

Mr. Sainsbury: Eleven civilian firemen posts will be lost; of the 11 posts lost, eight will be made redundant all on voluntary terms. The total cost of voluntary redundancy payments is estimated at £168,000.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the past five years RAF Lossiemouth has been used as a military emergency diversion airfield, showing these figures for *(a)* civilian and *(b)* military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: In the last five years RAF Lossiemouth has been used as an emergency diversion airfield on 311 occasions. Fifty-one of these diversions were by civil aircraft and 260 by military aircraft.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate has been made of jobs likely to be created for civilians following upon the establishment of RAF Kinloss as a military emergency diversion airfield; and if these can be shown according to support tasks.

Mr. Sainsbury: No additional posts, military or civilian, will be created at RAF Kinloss following the transfer of the military emergency diversion airfield task from RAF Lossiemouth.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held between his Department and representatives of local authority fire services to ensure that the brigade can meet required response times, including during silent hours, for the proposed military emergency diversion airfield facility at RAF Kinloss.

Mr. Neubert: The proposed military emergency diversion airfield facility at RAF Kinloss will not alter required response times for the local authority fire services. The need for discussions does not therefore arise.

The Royal Air Force has a standing requirement for liaison between RAF and local authority fire services and joint exercises are carried out at regular intervals.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training facilities will be offered to civilians recruited to RAF Kinloss prior to, and following upon, its establishment as a military emergency diversion airfield.

Mr. Neubert: There will be no civilians recruited to RAF Kinloss specifically as a result of its designation as a military emergency diversion airfield. The question of training does not therefore arise.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the official category of RAF Lossiemouth following upon the transfer of its military emergency diversion airfield facility to RAF Kinloss in June 1989.

Mr. Neubert: When RAF Lossiemouth ceases to be designated a military emergency diversion airfield in June 1989, it will continue as an operational flying station within 18 Group of Strike Command.

Museum of Artillery

Mr. Cartwright (Woolwich): To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposals to transfer the Museum of Artillery and the Royal Artillery archives from Woolwich to Larkhill.

Mr. Neubert: At present, the various buildings occupied by the three Royal Artillery Museums at Woolwich do not permit the complete collection of artifacts to be properly displayed. Furthermore, the potential for expansion of the museums both in terms of exhibits and the number of visitors who may be attracted to them is extremely limited. As a consequence, the museum authorities are examining various proposals for a new museum where all the present collection and archives can be relocated and where it will be possible to attract larger number of visitors. Discussions have taken place with the Ministry of Defence on the possibility of siting the new museum at Larkhill. However, these are at an early stage and no decisions have been taken either by the Ministry of Defence or the museum authorities.

Falkland Islands (Food)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the fresh produce that is shipped to the Falkland Islands is entirely consumed by service personnel; and what is the wastage rate of fresh produce shipped to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Fresh produce shipped to the Falkland Islands is almost entirely consumed by service personnel, the only exceptions being supplies issued to the King Edward Memorial hospital and families occupying married quarters in Mount Pleasant. Issues to the hospital ensure that the dietary needs of all civilian and service patients are met. In both cases issues are made at full repayment rates. Stringent quality control ensures that the wastage rate of fresh produce shipped to the Falklands is very small.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of specialist catering staff involved in the distribution of foodstuffs on the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Distribution of foodstuffs on the Falklands is carried out by the RAOC Ration Platoon. The platoon are not caterers, but include in their establishment a petty officer and a leading cook who liaise with the Royal Navy afloat. RAF Mount Pleasant is responsible for catering support throughout Mount Pleasant complex and employs one NCO and four aircrew to distribute food commodities to the various catering outlets.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions mess funds on the Falkland Islands have had to be compensated from central funds due to errors in the distribution system of foodstuffs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the last 12 months discussions have been held with Royal Ordnance in which the subject of the wartime needs of his Department have been mentioned.

Mr. Sainsbury: Procurement to meet peacetime and wartime needs is kept under continuing review and, where appropriate, includes discussions with Royal Ordnance. The needs are one of the aspects which is considered in many discussions.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the number and *(b)* the different types of manufacturing capabilities whose retention has been considered with Royal Ordnance since its sale to British Aerospace.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to him on 30 November 1988, at column 296.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any consideration was given to applying for outline planning permission for any of the Royal Ordnance sites prior to their sale to British Aerospace.

Mr. Sainsbury: Before the sale of Royal Ordnance plc, the company had submitted outline planning applications in respect of land which it had identified as surplus to requirements at its Waltham Abbey and Enfield, North sites. Bidders for the company were aware of this.

Industrial Base (Wartime)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his staff are engaged in monitoring how

changes in the defence industrial base influence its ability to meet the requirements of British armed forces in the event of war.

Mr. Sainsbury: All staff involved in procuring equipment for the armed forces are aware of the importance of safeguarding vital sources of supply and of the military need for specific industrial capabilities. The potential effects of industrial procurement decisions on the defence industrial base are examined on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria exist for determining the ability of the United Kingdom defence industrial base to meet the wartime needs of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our procurement policy supports deterrence by providing our armed forces at all times with effective and reliable equipment. Value for money considerations include the ability of the United Kingdom defence industrial base to meet both or present and potential future requirements, as described in defence Open Government Document 83/01.

Royal Air Force Museum

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that all the best qualified groups have been given an opportunity to tender for the redevelopment of his Department's site at Graham park; and if he will ensure that no decision is made about any tender until the fullest consultations have taken place between his Department, the local authority and the trustees of the Royal Air Force museum.

Mr. Neubert: Hendon East camp is being sold following public tender. A national firm of agents has conducted a programme of advertising in the property press and circulated potential purchasers to ensure that all those who might wish to tender were given the opportunity to do so.

The Ministry of Defence has consulted with the local authority on the production of a planning brief for the site, but it will be for the eventual purchaser to obtain planning permission in the normal way before undertaking development. Negotiations with a preferred tenderer are proceeding. I am aware of the concerns of the trustees of the RAF museum.

Battle Tank

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the procurement of a new main battle tank for the Army.

Mr. Younger: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made in the House today on the replacement of the Chieftain tank.

In my statement, I pointed out that precise criteria for performance and technical achievement have been established against which the success of the demonstration phase will be measured. The requirements of the demonstration phase are in summary as follows:

(a) to demonstrate overall vehicle performance in prototype tanks;
(b) to demonstrate successful integration at bench level;
(c) to demonstrate weapon system performance;
(d) to demonstrate armour performance;
(e) to achieve successful proof firing of the CHARM gun;
(f) to demonstrate fightability;
(g) to demonstrate system accuracy;
(h) to produce an acceptable risk assessment;
(i) to produce an acceptable reliability analysis;
(j) to specify equipment, stores and facilities which the Ministry of Defence would be called upon to supply;
(k) to demonstrate that the improved ammunition round can be successfully developed.

The requirements will be specified in detail in the contract with the company.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 21 December 1988

TRANSPORT

London Underground (Safety)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he is taking *(a)* to reduce overcrowded carriages on the London underground and *(b)* to increase safety against personal attack or accidents at stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Since October 1986 investment of over £100 million has been approved on measures to relieve overcrowding in addition to the modernisation of the Central line at a cost of some £720 million. More is in the pipeline and the central London rail study is developing a strategy to relieve congestion and cater for the forecast growth to the end of the century. As regards passenger security and safety, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 20 December and to the statement by the Secretary of State on 10 November at column 496.

Light Dues

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to bring United Kingdom light dues into line with the rest of the European Economic Community by 1992.

Mr. Portillo: Each European Community country is permitted to charge for services, and light dues are a charge for a service which the Government believe the users should, as far as is practicable, continue to meet.

Ports

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the extent to which British ports are at a disadvantage in relation to many European competitors, as a result of the level of subsidies received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: There is competition with continental ports in deep sea trade. The volume of transhipment via Belgian and Dutch ports doubled between 1976 and 1984, and in 1984 to 1986 was about 10 per cent. of United Kingdom deep sea trade, 5 per cent. of all United Kingdom international sea trade. The relative importance in transhipment of state assistance to continental ports and of other factors cannot be reliably estimated.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for transport what is his policy towards the financing and operation of ports in the light of the Carossino report to the European Parliament, (Document A 2-0215/8) of 17 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The report commented on many matters. I welcome its call for action to secure transparency of accounts and fair competition among ports.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish British Rail's 12-month response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on Network SouthEast.

Mr. Channon: I have today placed a copy of British Rail's response in the Library of the House. In making its initial response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report in February, British Rail accepted all of the commission's recommendations and set out the action it intended to take. I welcome the steps British Rail has already taken in implementing those recommendations and will continue to monitor progress.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make fresh appointments to London Regional Transport.

Mr. Channon: I have today appointed Mr. Wilfrid Newton, at present chairman of the Hong Kong mass transit railway, to serve as chairman of London Regional Transport for a period of five years from 13 March 1989. I am grateful to Sir Neil Shields for serving as chairman of LRT in the interim.

Railway Lines and Motorways (Usage)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has as to the average daily number of users per mile of *(a)* InterCity railway lines and *(b)* motorways.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:*

(a) The estimated number of passengers per route mile per day on InterCity railways was 12,900 in 1987.

(b) There is no direct information about occupancy rates for vehicles on motorways. The estimated average daily flow of vehicles per mile for all motorways was 44,400 in 1987. We estimate that this volume of vehicle flow would represent approximately 85,000 drivers/passengers per mile per day, with about 80 per cent. of these travelling by car.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to encourage the manufacture of cars which may run on lead-free petrol.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* Regulations made in September mean that from 1 October 1990 virtually all new cars will have to be capable of running on unleaded petrol. Manufacturers have already made considerable progress towards meeting this binding requirement. In the first nine months of 1988, only 18 per cent. of the new petrol-engined vehicles sold were in the leaded only category.

Vehicle Sales

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of *(a)* new petrol-engined car sales and *(b)* new diesel-engined car sales, respectively, for each of the last five years in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:*

(i) New Registrations: Cars: United Kingdom[1]

Thousand

	Petrol-engined	*Diesel-engined*	*Total*[2]
1984	1,780	48	1,828
1985	1,841	68	1,909
1986	1,865	79	1,944
1987	1,984	94	2,079
[3]1988	2,180	105	2,285

[1] Figures are for vehicles with a car body type. Figures for Northern Ireland are available on a slightly different basis from those for Great Britain but this does not significantly affect the United Kingdom totals.

[2] Includes a small number of cars propelled by other means.

[3] The estimate for 1988 is based on registrations in the first 10 months of the year.

(ii) Readily available information about new car registrations for EEC countries does not identify method of propulsion. In any case, information is not available for recent years for all countries and it is therefore not possible to produce EEC totals.

Vehicle Sales

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of light commercial vehicles sales in the United Kingdom, and the proportion of those that were diesel engined, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:*

New registrations: light commercial vehicles: United Kingdom[1]

	Total (thousand)	*Percentage diesel*
1984	112	24
1985	131	37
1986	160	38
1987	158	43
[2]1988	173	46

[1] Figures are for all goods vehicles with a gross vehicle weight under 3·5 tonnes. Figures for Northern Ireland are available on a slightly different basis from those for Great Britain but this does not significantly affect the United Kingdom totals.

[2] The estimate for 1988 is based on registrations in the first 10 months of the year.

M77 Extension

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the opposition to the proposed M77 extension, he will halt its construction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

A public local inquiry into objecting to the A77 Ayr road route proposals was held in Glasgow earlier this year. The reporter has recently submitted part I of his report and I expect the full report to be completed early next year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will decide whether the road improvement should go ahead when he has considered the full report.

ENVIRONMENT

"Living in Terror"

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for his housing policies of the report of the Commission for Racial Equality, entitled "Living in Terror".

Mr. Trippier: We took steps in the Housing Act 1988 to give statutory backing for a code of practice on rented housing, to be prepared by the Commission for Racial Equality. In the same Act, we extended the duty to eliminate racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity to the Housing Corporation and to our proposed housing action trusts.

Government Offices (Cambridge)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums of money he plans to spend on roof repairs to blocks A, B and C of the Government offices at Brooklands avenue, Cambridge; if he has any plans to sell this site to the private sector; and what are the implications of his plans for the staff currently at Newmarket.

Mr. Chope: Roof repairs to blocks A, B and C are estimated to cost £204,000, £52,000 and £25,000 respectively. I will continue to keep the long-term use of the site under review.

Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance, in the form of planning circulars his Department, is giving to local planning authorities in relation to the provision of low-cost housing;

(2) what guidance in the form of planning circulars his Department gives to local planning authorities in relation to starter homes;

(3) what guidance in the form of planning circulars his Department gives to local planning authorities in relation to increasing the provision of housing for *(a)* the elderly, *(b)* the disabled and *(c)* single persons.

Mr. Chope: The Department has issued no planning guidance dealing specifically with these matters. But within our general guidance on land for housing, contained in planning policy guidance note 3 and circular 15/84, we emphasise that development plans will need to take account of the varied types of housing requirement met by the private sector such as those of single persons, small households and the elderly. We stress also the importance we attach to the provision of low-cost starter homes.

Drinking Water

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which areas of Derbyshire fail to meet the standards set out in the European drinking water directive (Directive 80/778/EEC.)

Mr. Moynihan: Drinking water supplies to Derbyshire do not regularly exceed the standards set in the EC drinking water directive except for supplies to a small part of south Derbyshire which exceed the directive nitrate limit. About 1,000 people receive this water. Remedial programmes are in hand.

Supplies to north west Chesterfield, north Buxton and the area around Ashbourne occasionally exceed the directive limit for iron manganese or aluminium.

Conservation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, further to his statement on the outcome of the Council of Environment Ministers' meeting in Brussels on 24 November, *Official Report*, 29 November, columns *200-1*, he has assessed whether the implementation of the Berne, Bonn and Ramsar conventions alone would provide an adequate means to protect threatened species and threatened habitats in the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The best way to achieve effective nature conservation in the European Economic Community is for each member state to implement legislation which meets its own conservation needs, fulfils its international obligations and takes account of its own institutional frameworks and social structures. As I made clear in my previous answer, at the Environment Council on 24 November there was general support for the United Kingdom's view that the Community could most usefully assist member states, where appropriate, to implement fully the Bern, Bonn and Ramsar conventions.

London Dockland Development Corporation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now give his consent to the sale by the London Dockland Development Corporation of the site for a new Roman Catholic church in Surry docks, at the valuation agreed by the corporation and the church authorities, for which the corporation applied in a letter to his Department of 5 November 1987.

Mr. Trippier: Consent was given to LDDC on 20 December 1988.

Waterways (Maintenance)

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report published in May 1987 on the maintenance of the British Waterways Board's waterways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The British Waterways Board is continuing to make good progress in implementing the commission's recommendations and I am placing copies of its second response in the Library of the House.

Improvements in the board's management, structural organisation, information systems, resource allocation, and procedures for project appraisal are being implemented as part of a major four year programme of change to develop a more commercial approach to the waterway business with the optimum balance between in-house work and contracting out. I welcome these changes and the commitment with which board members and staff are carrying them through.

The board has also taken action this year to divest itself of its remaining non-waterway-based freight operations while continuing to promote the use of suitable waterways for private freight transport. Leisure market prospects are being reviewed and means of quantifying the public service role of the BWB network explored. The board's property portfolio is being exploited in line with existing objectives and the scope for further potential has been identified in a study by independent consultants which the board commissioned earlier this year.

I am looking forward to seeing a fully worked up business plan on the basis of the board's current work and to consider the outcome of the property study before deciding on appropriate levels of grant for future years and on the possible changes in financial framework to which the board refers in its response. I shall continue to keep under review the question of the board's ownership of and statutory responsibilities for public road bridges over canals.

The board will aim to produce a final report on the implementation of the commission's recommendations by May 1990 in the light of which I shall make a further statement.

Local Authorities (Development Powers)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet reached a decision on the proposed new economic development powers for local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We announced our intention in the White Paper "The Conduct of Local Authority Business" to propose a new general, but circumscribed, power to engage in economic development initiatives. We have now reached conclusions about the form of this power in England and Wales. The different existing powers for Scottish local authorities mean that the proposal there will follow a separate timetable.

The new power will greatly simplify the position. At the moment local authorities have no specific powers for economic development spending, but can use a number of other powers. The aim is to make sure expenditure by local authorities can be targeted for maximum benefit.

The new power will be framed as a general power to undertake expenditure to facilitate economic development by others, to manage and turn to account assets acquired by such expenditure, and to make charges in connection with the provision of assets and services under the new powers. Economic development will cover investment in, the setting up or expansion of, or the creation or maintenance of employment in commercial, industrial or public undertakings within their localities. These general powers are intended to replace existing powers to the extent that they are used for these purposes.

The Government are firmly of the opinion, however, that there are certain areas of activity which are not appropriate for local authorities. The general powers will therefore be subject to restrictions to be specified in regulations. The Government will consult locl authorities and others about these regulations.

The present intention is that local authorities themselves should not be able to undertake most direct manufacturing and trading activities, banking, insurance business, investment broking, the media, and the provision of certain professional services such as conveyancing and audit.

Restrictions will also prevent the new powers being used for certain forms of expenditure such as deficit financing and for grants specifically to support wages and salaries. While the new power will be available to all principal local authorities, expenditure on grants, loans and guarantees to businesses conducted with a view to profit will be restricted to areas which have a particular need to promote economic development.

These areas will be detailed in the regulations following consultation and will include at least all those areas which

currently benefit from some form of central Government priority. There will be a power to adapt the definitions to changing circumstances.

Uses of the new powers may be capable of constituting "state aids" subject to restriction or notification under articles 92 and 93 of the treaty of Rome. Where this is a consideration, provision will be needed for notification and clearance with the European Commission through the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office.

Local authorities will be required to prepare a separate memorandum account of their activities (both on capital and revenue account) under these new powers. They will be required to consult representatives of the local business community (possibly in the context of the consultations already required under section 134 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) on their proposals for the use of the new powers. They will also be required to take into account any guidance issued by the Government to promote value for money and consistency between Government and local authority initiatives.

The Government have considered the question of a financial limit on the use of the new power, to which they referred in the White Paper. They do not consider that the new power should lead to any significant change in the level of local authority activity in this field, since it is intended merely to simplify the framework within which this activity takes place. In these circumstances, they have concluded that it would be inappropriate to set any general financial limits on the use of the power: the general financial disciplines to which local authorities are subject will be sufficient.

As a reserve power (to deal, for example, with circumstances where one local authority is distorting the local economy to the disadvantage of neighbouring areas), there will be provision for the Secretary of State to impose a limit on individual authorities' spending under the new power. However, this power is intended as a reserve power, since the Government are not aware of any current circumstances which would justify any use of such a power.

Planning Inspectorate

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about future management arrangements for the Planning Inspectorate.

Mr. Ridley: I propose to consider whether the planning inspectorate should become an executive agency within my Department. The change to agency status would enable the inspectorate to operate within an agreed framework of objectives and performance targets and would provide for greater management responsibility in the use of resources.

The organisational changes that I envisage would not in any way affect the inspectorate's functions, its policy accountabilty, nor the high standards of integrity and impartiality with which its work is carried out.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the United Kingdom will ratify the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am pleased to announce that the United Kingdom and its dependent territories, together with the European Community and most other member states, ratified the protocol in New York on 16 December. Only France and Belgium had not completed their internal procedures by that date. This means that the necessary ratifications are now in place for the protocol to enter into force as planned on 1 January 1989.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in England at 1988-89 prices breaking down the figures between *(a)* 1978-79 and 1979-80, *(b)* 1978-79 and 1980-81, *(c)* 1978-79 and 1981-82, *(d)* 1978-79 and 1982-83, *(e)* 1978-79 and 1983-84, *(f)* 1978-79 and 1984-85, *(g)* 1978-79 and 1985-86, *(h)* 1978-79 and 1986-87, *(i)* 1978-79 and 1987-88 and *(j)* 1978-79 and 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: The figures are shown in the following table:

	RSG £ *million*	*Difference from 1978-79 RSG* £ *million*	*Cumulative difference* £ *million*
1978-79	14,323	0	0
1979-80	13,749	574	574
1980-81	13,638	685	1,259
1981-82	12,905	1,418	2,677
1982-83	12,069	2,254	4,931
1983-84	11,605	2,718	7,649
1984-85	11,091	3,232	10,881
1985-86	10,580	3,743	14,624
1986-87	10,124	4,199	18,823
1987-88	10,059	4,264	23,087
1988-89	9,687	4,636	27,723

Notes:

All figures are in 1988-89 prices. The figures for 1978-79 to 1984-85 are final. Those for 1985-86 to 1988-89 are estimates based on the supplementary reports laid before the House on 19 December 1988. The figures exclude payments to bodies specified under 56(9) of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Such payments are currently about £10 million per year.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the preliminary results of the non-domestic rating valuation.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* We hope to make an announcement early in the new year on the transitional arrangements for giving effect to the non-domestic revaluation and for the introduction of the unified business rate.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responsibility his Department has for ensuring that foodstuffs are safe for human consumption and carry no risk of food poisoning; in what way this responsibility is carried out; how many and what type of staff are required; what is the annual cost to his Department; and what has been the change in the number of staff and the annual cost to his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* None.

Water Authorities

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, *Official Report*, 8 December, column *280*, was the total *(a)* value of the local authorities assets transferred to the water authorities and *(b)* amount of debt liabilities for which the water authorities took responsibility.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Figures for the book value of assets inherited from predecessor authorities by the 10 regional water authorities on 1 April 1974 are given in the published accounts of the water authorities for 1974-75, as are figures for debt liabilities taken over. Water authority accounts are laid before Parliament.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, *Official Report*, 8 December, column *280*, he will list *(a)* the local authorities, *(b)* the water authorities and *(c)* the assets involved in the transactions referred to, and the debt liabilities in each case.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The local authorities concerned were those exercising water supply and sewerage functions in England and Wales up to 31 March 1974. The water authorities were the 10 regional water authorities set up under the Water Act 1973. In all, the water authorities took on the responsibilities of nearly 1,600 local undertakings. It would not be possible to draw up a list of those undertakings except at disproportionate cost. No list of the assets transferred from predecessor authorities is available centrally. It is not possible to assign a portion of the related debt to each item of the assets transferred.

Bristol Channel (Pollution)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the existing consents for discharges of sewage, treated or raw, and trade effluent into the Bristol channel, and those applications that are currently awaiting a decision on both the Welsh and the English side.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* This information is not held centrally. The public registers which, in common with other authorities, the Severn Trent, South West, Welsh and Wessex water authorities are required to maintain, contain details of all authorised discharges of sewage and trade effluent to the British channel.

Fire Service

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much in percentage terms each region's ratepayers pay for their fire service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The amount by which ratepayers fund individual services is not known since services are also funded by central Government block grant which is not attributable to individual services.

Hazardous Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to whom copies were sent of *(a)* the consultation paper on hazardous waste dated 29 June and *(b)* consultation document (Amendments to Waste Disposal Law), dated 23 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The announcement of 29 June setting out the Government's decisions following earlier consultation on waste disposal law amendments, and the follow-up consultation paper dated 23 November 1988 have been placed in the Library of the House. Copies of these papers were widely distributed to interested bodies.

Local Authority Debt

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the result of his meeting at the beginning of December with the Local Authorities Association regarding initial proposals in his recent consultation paper to impose the equal instalment of principal method for repaying local authority debt; whether the alternative proposal of a fixed percentage repayment scheme has superseded his original, preferred method; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The consultation paper issued by my Department on 7 July 1988 proposed that local authority credit liabilities should in future be amortised by charges to revenue account using the "equal instalments of principal" method. At a meeting on 29 November with representatives of the main local authority associations, I undertook to seek their views on an alternative method known as the "reducing balance" method. I am sending to the hon. Member a copy of the official letter dated 2 December by which that undertaking was discharged.

Weedkillers

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which European Economic Community countries the weedkillers Altrazine and Simazine are permitted and in which they are banned; whether these chemicals find their way into tap water for human consumption; whether they are a health hazard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that Atrazine and Simazine are not prohibited under European Community legislation but member states may prohibit substances nationally if they wish. There is no central registrar of approved or prohibited pesticides for individual member states. Both substances are approved for use in the United Kingdom. Water undertakers in the United Kingdom carry out routine monitoring for pesticides and traces of Atrazine and Simazine have been detected in some drinking water supplies at levels which are not considered to be a health risk.

PRIME MINISTER

Food Production and Safety

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the division of responsibility between the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health in the area of food production and food safety.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), on 7 December at column *163*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No.

Tobacco

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will conduct an inquiry into the change in the number of independent shops retailing tobacco: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Post Office

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response the Post Office has made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on Post Office Counters services at Crown offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I am placing in the Library of the House copies of the Post Office's response to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) on Post Office Counters services at Crown offices published on 23 June 1988 (Cmnd 398). The commission made 80 individual recommendations on various aspects of the operation of Crown offices and wider issues, namely: the organisation of the counters business; its financial management; the market for counters services; pricing; investment; the planning process; quality of service; productivity; management of Crown offices; manpower and industrial relations; the counters network; and automation.

The Post Office has accepted 68 of the commission's recommendations, closely related to the operation of the Crown offices themselves. My Department has now agreed a detailed timetable with the Post Office for the implementation of these recommendations in accordance with the standard procedures for follow-up of MMC reports.

Of the remaining 12 recommendations, the Post Office has rejected one and has reservations or qualifications about 11. Most of these remaining recommendations have implications beyond the immediate subject of the report. These include the impact of potential new business on counters; pricing arrangements with Government clients; the size and composition of the counters network; and automation; on all of which continuing consultation with Government is necessary.

As far as the single recommendation which the Post Office does not accept is concerned—the requirement that long-term client support should be an essential pre-condition to proceeding with installation of a major automation system—the Post Office recognises that client commitment is a desirable objective and will take the extent of this commitment into account in any strategic decisions which are made.

The MMC made several recommendations about the Crown office network, notably recommendation 61 that counters should consider a much more substantial programme of regrading Crown offices. While the Post Office accepts the need for this consideration to be given, along with consideration of other planning options, it has made it clear that no decision will be taken on any regradings beyond the 250 currently planned until the success of the commercial contract and the response of staff in putting forward proposals for cost reduction have been received and evaluated.

I will be monitoring the Post Office's progress in carrying forward appropriate action on the recommendations, on the basis of reports in June 1989 and June 1991. I should like to take this opportunity to convey the Government's gratitude to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for its thorough and valuable investigation.

Inner City Task Forces

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the leaders of the inner city task forces; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met the leaders of the inner city task forces at their conference in Liverpool on 9 December. I discussed with them a wide range of matters relating to their operations and made clear the Government's continuing commitment to the task force initiative.

Advisory Panel on Deregulation

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current membership of the advisory panel on deregulation; and when he will be appointing new members.

Mr. Maude: Three new members have been appointed and will join the panel on 1 January 1989. They are:

Mr. Mike Fisher
Managing Director, Whale Tankers Ltd., Solihull, West Midlands

Mrs. Jenifer Rosenberg
Managing Director, J & J Fashions Ltd., London

Mrs. Celia Urquhart
Managing Director, CU Data Ltd., Glasgow

The existing membership of the Advisory Panel on Deregulation is as follows:

Sir Nigel Mobbs DL (Chairman)
Chairman & Chief Executive, Slough Estates plc, Slough

Mr. Colin Dauris
Chairman & Managing Director, James Dauris & Co. Ltd., London

Mr. George Gray
Chairman & Managing Director, Valley Capital Ltd., Carnforth, Lancashire, and Deputy Chairman, Development Commission

Mrs. Teresa Graham
Senior Manager, Price Waterhouse, Newcastle

Mr. Damon de Laszlo
Chairman, Harwin Ltd., Portsmouth

Mr. Stephen Moss
Director, Grosvenor Securities Ltd. and Drakes Restaurant, London

Mr. Tom O'Connor
Chairman & Managing Director, Elta Plastics, Stockton-on-Tees

Mr. Phillip White
Chairman & Chief Executive, WYKO Group plc, Dudley, West Midlands

The advisory panel has made a useful contribution to the enterprises and deregulation unit's work by advising it on the impact of regulatory requirements on business and enterprise development. I should like to express my

gratitude to it and particularly to the four retiring members, Mr. Brian Adgey, Mr. Brian Crack, Mr. Robert Fleeman and Mr. Clive Parritt.

The new appointments will help to ensure the panel's continuing effectiveness as a source of valuable advice.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Steel (Privatisation)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, pursuant to his reply on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *263*, he will list those major companies whose existing shareholders received direct mail shots for the British Steel offer.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* No. The mailing list used for the British Steel direct mail shot was obtained through the Department's public relations advisers and the Department does not have a complete list of the companies concerned.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has approved and made an offer of regional selective assistance to Quinton Snack Foods of Skelmersdale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am not normally able to discuss offers of financial assistance for reasons of commercial confidentiality. Under the circumstances, however, Quintins Snack Foods has agreed that I may inform my hon. Friend that an offer of regional selective assistance has been made to the company, which it has accepted. I hope to make a further announcement in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Law Officers' or the Lord Chancellor's Departments have investigated, or are currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to their departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Home Secretary to a similar question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December 1988 at column *1080*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has information, which he can publish in a form that does not jeopardise national security, which indicates the volume of weapons allegedly supplied by Libya to the Irish Republican Army before and after the bombing of Libya by the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It would not be in the national interest to disclose detailed information of this nature. However, we have good reason to believe that substantial volumes of weaponry were supplied by Libya to the Provisional Irish Republican Army both before and after the United States bombing of Libya.

South Africa (Military Service)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the imprisonment of young South African Christians for refusing to do military service on grounds of conscience, with particular reference to the recent case of Charles Bester.

Mrs. Chalker: None. We understand why some young South Africans choose to refuse to do military service and respect the sincerity of their views. But such decisions are a matter for the individual concerned.

Human Rights

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet authorities expressing reluctance in the United Kingdom to support the proposal of a human rights conference in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1989 without a full solution of the problem of Refuseniks still unable to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Soviet authorities are already well aware of our long-standing view that agreement to a Moscow conference on human rights in 1991 is possible only in circumstances of a major improvement in the Soviet human rights performance. There have been encouraging signs recently, including over long-standing refusenik cases. We are currently pressing for more progress.

Namibia

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government plan to contribute to the United Nations group which will monitor Namibia's transition to independence, UNTAG.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall of course be paying in full our assessed contribution to the costs of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). In addition, we have offered to provide a unit of signallers with their equipment for up to a year to carry out the signals function for UNTAG.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 19 December.

Mrs. Chalker: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Brussels on 19 December. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the outcome of the mid-term meeting of the GATT Uruguay round in Montreal on 4-9 December. The Council noted that the meeting had made progress in a large number of areas, that agriculture remained the most difficult area, and that all sides would need to show flexibility before the senior officials' meeting in April.

The Council discussed the dispute with the United States over the directive banning imports of hormone-treated meat; agreed on a derogation for pet food, and asked the Commission to explore the possibilities for a negotiated settlement.

The Council adopted guidelines for the 1989 programme of aid to Asia and Latin America, and agreed to early implementation of a new EC-China agreement on textiles. There was further discussion of the Community's external steel regime, and of new financial protocols for Cyprus and Malta. There was a short discussion of follow-up to the Rhodes European Council.

In the margins of the Council, an EC-Yugoslavia Co-operation Council was held, and the EC-Czechoslovakia trade agreement was signed.

In discussion of political co-operation subjects, we agreed that it would now be useful for Troika Foreign Ministers to undertake direct contacts with all parties in the Arab-Israel dispute, including of course Israel and the United States. The aim will be to encourage movement towards direct negotiations in the framework of an international peace conference.

We also endorsed the decision of TREVI Ministers that the EPC working group on judicial co-operation should give early attention to improved cooperation among the member states over matters of extradition procedure.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there have been any recent changes to the Civil Service occupational pension arrangements.

Mr. Brooke: I am pleased to say that a new Civil Service additional voluntary contribution (AVC) scheme is being introduced with effect from 1 January 1989. The new arrangements will give members of the principal Civil Service pension scheme (PCSPS) who want to make additional voluntary contributions a significantly improved choice about the way in which they can buy increased pension cover, within Inland Revenue limits.

The PCSPS facility for buying added years of reckonable service will continue. But, in addition, members of the PCSPS will have a money purchase option with a choice—between the Equitable Life Assurance Society and the Scottish Widows' Fund and Life Assurance Society, about the financial institution that their contributions are invested with in order to produce additional benefits. Members will have a further choice about the method of investment. Each society will offer with profits and unit-linked investments and each society will provide an option for investment in a building society account (the Woolwich Equitable Building Society in the case of the Equitable; Bristol and West Building Society in the case of Scottish Widows').

The new scheme represents a very positive response, by the Government as employer, to the AVC requirements of the Social Security Act 1986 and to the thrust of that Act and other recent legislation towards improving the choice that individuals have about their pension arrangements and about how their pension contributions are invested. The Civil Service AVC scheme, a copy of which I am placing in the Library, will put the Civil Service pension arrangements in the forefront of AVC provision by occupational pension schemes.

Civil Service Manpower

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 October.

Mr. Major: On 1 October 1988 there were 573,891 staff in post in central Government Departments. Of these, 502,407 were non-industrials and 71,484 were industrials.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish *(a)* the number of companies providing property to rent which have assistance from the business expansion scheme established by the provision of the Finance Act 1988 and *(b)* the number of such companies which are currently operating in Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is not yet available centrally from official sources.

Electricity, Water and Steel

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list advisers and underwriters appointed for foreign purchases of *(a)* electricity, *(b)* water and *(c)* steel; if he will state the cost of the appointments; and which countries are covered by the appointments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Overseas banks have been appointed as set out below to advise on the desirability and feasibility of overseas offers in connection with the privatisations of British Steel, the water authorities of England and Wales and the electricity supply industry of England and Wales. Overseas advisers for the British Steel privatisation were appointed as lead managers in their territories when it it was decided to proceed with overseas offers or placings in the United States, Canada, Japan and continental Europe, and the underwriters for each of the overseas offers are also listed below. It is not the practice to publish details of individual contracts, but the costs of the British Steel flotation will be reported in due course in the usual way.

	Country	*Overseas Financial Advisers*	*Overseas Underwriters*
Water	United States	Salomon Brothers Shearson Lehman Hutton (retained to advise on specific aspects of sale to retail investors in a potential United States offer)	Not applicable
	Canada	Wood Gundy	
	Japan	Daiwa Europe	
	Europe	Credit Suisse First Boston	

	Country	*Overseas Financial Advisers*	*Overseas Underwriters*
Electricity Supply	United States	Goldman Sachs	Not applicable
British Steel (financial advisers subsequently appointed as lead managers for offers for sale of British Steel, in United States, Canada, Japan and for a placing in continental Europe)	United States	Goldman Sachs	Goldman Sachs and Co. The First Boston Corporation Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith Inc. Morgan Stanley and Co. Inc. Salomon Brothers Inc. Bear, Stearns and Co. Inc. Alex. Brown and Sons Inc. Dillon, Read and Co. Inc. Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette Securities Corporation Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc. Kidder, Peabody and Co. Inc. Lazard Freres and Co. PaineWebber Inc. Prudential-Bache Securities Inc. Shearson Lehman Hutton Inc. Smith Barney, Harris Upham and Co. Inc. S. G. Warburg and Co. Inc. Wertheim Schroder and Co. Inc. Dean Witter Reynolds Inc. Advest Inc. Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder Inc. William Blair and Company J. C. Bradford and Co. Dain Bosworth Inc. A. G. Edwards and Sons Inc. McDonald and Company Securities Inc. Oppenheimer and Co. Inc. Piper, Jaffray and Hopwood Inc. Prescott Ball and Turben Inc. The Robinson-Humphrey Company Inc. Thomson McKinnon Securities Inc. Bateman Eichler, Hill Richards Inc. Blunt Ellis and Loewi Inc. Butcher and Singer Inc. Cowen and Co. First Southwest Company Furman Selz Mager Dietz and Birney Inc. Janney Montgomery Scott Inc. Ladenburg, Thalmann and Co. Inc. C. J. Lawrence, Morgan Grenfell Inc. Morgan Keegan and Company Inc. Needham and Company Inc. Neuberger and Berman Parker/Hunter Inc. Stifel Nicolaus and Company Inc. Sutro and Co. Inc. Underwood, Neuhaus and Co. Inc.
	Canada	Scotia McLeod	Scotia McLeod Wood Gundy Burns Fry Merrill Lynch Canada
	Japan	Nomura Secuurities Co.	Nomura Securities Co. Daiwa Secrities Co. Nikko Securities Co. Yamaichi Securities Co.
	Europe	Swiss Bank Corporation Investment Banking Ltd. (SBCI)	
	Germany		Deutsche Bank Capital Markets Limited Commerzbank Aktiengesellschaft Bayerische Hypotheken—und Wechsel—Bank Aktiengesellschaft DG BANK Deutsche Genossenschaftsbank Schweizerischer Bankverein (Deutschland) AG Dresdner Bank Aktiengesellschaft Bayerische Landesbank Girozentrale Berliner Handels—und Frankfurter Bank Deutsche Girozentrale—Deutsche Kommunalbank—Vereins—und Westbank Aktiengesellschaft Westdeutsche Landesbank Girozentrale

Country	Overseas Financial Advisers	Overseas Underwriters
France		Banque Paribas Capital Markets Limited
		Banque Indosuez
		Credit Commercial de France
		Societe Generale
		Banque de Gestion Privee-SIB
		Rothschild and Cie. Banque
		Banque Nationale de Paris
		Cl-Alexanders Laing and Cruickshank
		Banque Stern-Groupe Societe de Banque Suisse
Italy		Mediobanca-Banca di Credito Finanziario S.p.A.
		Banca Commerciale Italiana
		Credito Italiano
		Banca Popolare di Milano
		Nuovo Banco Ambrosiano
		Banca Nazionale del Lavoro
		Cassa di Risparmio delle Provincie Lombarde-CARIPLO
		Banca Nazionale dell 'Agricoltura
		Banco di Roma S.p.A.
		Instituto Bancario San Paola di Torino
		Credito Romagnolo S.p.A.
Netherlands		Amsterdam-Rotterdam Bank NV
		Cooperatieve Centrale Raiffeisen-Boerenleen Bank BA
		SBCI Swiss Bank Corporation Investment banking NV
		Pierson, Heldring and Pierson NV
		Nederlandsche Middenstandsbank
Switzerland and Leichtenstein		SBCI Swiss Bank Corporation Investment banking Ltd.
		Credit Suisse First Boston Limited
		Swiss Volksbank London Branch
		Julius Baer International Limited
		Compagnie de Banque et d'Investissements
		Leu Securities Limited
		Pictet International Ltd.
		BSI-Banca della Svizzera Italiana
		Hentsch et Cie
		Sarasin Investment Management Limited
		SG Warburg Soditic (Jersey) Limited
		Union Bank of Switzerland (Securities) Limited
		Banca del Gottardo
		HandelsBank NatWest (Overseas) Limited
		Lombard Odier International Underwriters SA
		Bank J. Vontobel and Co. AG
		Rothschild Bank AG
		Swiss Cantobank Securities Limited
Other European countries		SBCI Swiss Bank Corporation Investment Banking Ltd.
		Creditanstalt—Bankverein
		Generale Bank
		Enskilda Securities, Skandinaviska Enskilda Ltd.
		Kansallis-Osake-Pankki
		Banco Hispano Americano SA

Inland Revenue (Staff)

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, in terms of the number of employees, the turnover of staff in the Inland Revenue for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: During the year to 31 March 1988, 7,050 staff left, of whom 2,340 retired. This is slightly over 10 per cent. of the total staff in post at 1 April 1987.

EC Budget

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the 1989 European Community budget procedures.

Mr. Brooke: The President of the European Parliament declared the 1989 budget adopted on 15 December after the Council's budget committee, at a meeting in Strasbourg, had authorised the President of the Budget Council to accept the level of expenditure which resulted from the Parliament's second reading debate.

The 1989 budget amounts to 46,423 mecu (£32,250 million) in commitments and 44,838 mecu (£31,150 million) in payments, respectively 2,052 mecu (£1,426 million) and 2,047 mecu (£1,422 million) below the overall expenditure ceilings in the financial perspective, which forms part of the inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between the Council, the Parliament and the Commission. Provision for expenditure on agricultural market support is 26,761 mecu (£18,590 million), almost 1,900 mecu (£1,320 million) less than the limit set by the financial guideline calculated in accordance with the budget discipline decision. Non-compulsory expenditure totals 13,848 mecu (£9,620 million) in commitments and 12,241 mecu (£8,504 million) in payments. These figures are 19·5 per cent. and 21·0 per cent. respectively higher than in the

1988 budget, reflecting the significant increase in the structural funds agreed at the February European Council. Provision for the United Kingdom's abatement under the Fontainebleau arrangements is 1,780 mecu (£1,237 million).

Taking account of a provisional surplus of 2,000 mecu (£1,390 million) carried forward from 1988, the own resources called up for the 1989 Budget represent 1·03 per cent. of Community GNP, compared with the relevant annual sub-ceiling in the new own resources decision of 1·17 per cent.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Litter Offences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many people were prosecuted for litter offences in the latest year for which figures are available and as to the average fine.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally indicates that there were 1,890 prosecutions for litter offences in 1987 and the average fine was £35.

Graffiti

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many people were prosecuted for offences related to graffiti in the latest year for which figures are availble and as to the average fine.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible from the information held centrally to indentify prosecutions which relate to graffiti. Such offences will be included under the general offence of criminal damage.

Exclusion and Attendance Orders

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost of imposing *(a)* an exclusion order and *(b)* an attendance order upon a convicted criminal.

Mr. John Patten: The average cost of the operation of an attendance centre order in 1987, the latest year for which information is available, is estimated to have been £117. The operation of a football exclusion order (under section 30 of the Public Order Act 1986) does not in itself give rise to any cost to public funds. The cost to the police of enforcing compliance with an order of either sort varies widely from one case to another, and is not recorded in a way which allows an average to be calculated.

Student Visas

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish details of the number of applications for student visas received at the British post in Colombo for the last five years for *(a)* Tamil and *(b)* Singhalese applicants and the numbers of visa applications refused and granted for the same categories.

Mr. Renton: The information available centrally is given in the following table.

Applications in Colombo for a student visa[1]

Number of persons

	Newly received[2]	*Applications Granted*[3]	*Refused initially*[4]
1985 30 May to December	n/a	500	240[4]
1986	n/a	630	200[4]
1987 January-June	n/a	180	70
July-December	440	320	120
1988 January-September	700	440	180

n/a = not available.

[1] The visa requirement for Sri Lankan citizens was introduced on 30 May 1985.

[2] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.

[3] Granted initially or on appeal.

[4] 210 applications were refused in the period September 1985 to July 1986, of which 150 were from Tamils. Similar information is not available for other periods.

Delia McCall

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the sentence of Delia McCall who is in Cookham Wood closed prison.

Mr. John Patten: No. The appropriate sentence in a particular case is entirely for the courts to decide in the light of all the relevant circumstances and subject to the right of appeal, which Delia McCall has exercised. I am not aware of any circumstances which would justify my right hon. Friend in recommending interference with the sentence imposed on her.

Prisons (Food)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average weekly cost of food for a prisoner.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The average weekly cost of food for an inmate in 1987-88 was £6·36.

Prisoners (Suicide)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides and attempted suicides there were in Armley prison, Leeds in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* from 1 January 1988 to 31 November 1988; and how many were (i) remand prisoners and (ii) under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There were no suicides at Leeds prison during 1986; two during 1987, of which one was by a remand inmate and neither by an inmate under 18; and three between 1 January and 30 November 1988, all by remand inmates, one of whom was under 18. There has also been one apparent suicide, yet to be confirmed as such by an inquest, during the latter period; the inmate concerned was on remand and was not under 18.

Thirteen attempted suicides were reported at Leeds prison during 1986, nine during 1987, and seven during 1988 up to 30 November. Information on the age and status of those involved is not normally held centrally, but I am aware that two of the attempts during 1988 were by inmates under 18.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides there were in British prisons from 1 January 1986 to 31 October 1988; and how many were of (i) remand prisoners and (ii) under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information in respect of suicides in prison establishments in England and Wales is given in the table below.

	Total number of suicides	*Suicides by remand prisoners*	*Suicides by prisoners under 18 years*
1986	17	10	0
1987	42	27	1
1988 (to 31 October 1988)	[1]29	[2]18	2

[1] Includes eight apparent suicides which have yet to be confirmed as suicide by coroners' inquests.
[2] Includes three apparent suicides which have yet to be confirmed as such by coroners' inquests.

Non-metropolitan Areas (Policing)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from chief constables on the steps they are taking to tackle outbreaks of disorder in non-metroplitan areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Following incidents of serious disorder in 1986 and over the 1987 new year period a working group comprising Home Office officials and representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers was set up to consider means of improving police response to public disorder in areas where rapid mobilisation of resources may be difficult.

The group has recently reported its findings and made a number of recommendations. I have placed a full list of the group's recommendations in the Library. The recommendations relate to ways that forces might be able to improve information gathering and collation to help predict the likelihood and degree of disorder; how contingency planning for the rapid mobilisation and deployment of officers could be sharpened up; how the operational tactics in confronting disorderly groups could be made more effective; and how following an outbreak of disorder procedures could be improved to detect offenders and bring them to justice.

With the agreement of the Association of Chief Police Officers I am circulating a copy of the report to all chief officers in England and Wales asking them to consider its recommendations to help inform their decisions on how best to tackle this sort of disorder in their areas.

Armley Prison

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average age of remand prisoners currently in Armley.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The readily available information is given in the following table.

Untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners[1] held in Leeds prison on 30 June 1988: by age and type of prisoner

Age	*Untried*	*Convicted unsentenced*
17-20	237	39
21-24	123	19
25-29	133	7
30-39	95	8
40-49	48	5
50-59	16	1
60 and over	6	—
All ages	658	79

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners remanded in Armley prison since January have not been convicted; and what percentage this is of the total number of those on remand.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding reply 8 December 1988]:* The readily available information held centrally relates to untried prisoners and is for the length of time since the initial reception into a prison service establishment. This may include some intervening time spent on bail.

It is estimated that of the 660 untried prisoners held in Leeds prison on 30 June 1988, 8 (1 per cent.) had been first received over a year earlier and about a further 70 (11 per cent.) had been first received between six and 12 months earlier.

Racial Harassment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the study on racial harassment produced for his Department by Brunel university.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

We are awaiting a final draft of the study report from Brunel university. We will then publish the report in the normal way.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Weapons Collectors' Catalogues)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ban the sending to schools of weapons collectors' catalogues; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no power to prevent books or other materials from being sent to schools. However, we look to advertisers to ensure that unsuitable material is not directed at children and young people, and that the provisons of the British code of advertising practice are followed. Schools should raise suspected breaches of the code with the Advertising Standards Authority, which administers it.

Degree Courses

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are studying on four-year degree courses in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland at *(a)* universities and *(b)* other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Jackson: In 1987 there were 20,800 full-time and sandwich students at universities in Great Britain, and 26,500 full-time, sandwich and part-time students at polytechnics and colleges in England, on the first year of four-year degree courses. Separate figures for university

students in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are not readily available. Figures for polytechnics and colleges in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Mature Students

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many mature students are studying on *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time courses at (i) universities, (ii) adult education colleges and (iii) other institutions of higher education in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is shown in the following table:

Mature students[1] in 1987 *Thousands*

	England	*Institutions in Wales*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*	*Northern Ireland*
Home full-time					
Universities (GB)	13·7	1·3	2·2	17·3	1·1
Polytechnics and Colleges (GB)	36·9	1·8	5·7	44·5	..
Non advanced further education (England)	34·8	..	..	..	..
Part-time					
Universities (GB)	..	..	..	13·8	..
Polytechnics and colleges (GB)	97·5	3·8	9·7	111·0	..
Non advanced further education (England)	86·7	..	..	..	..

1. Mature students are defined as postgraduates aged 25 or over and first degree, sub-degree and non advanced students aged 21 or over on the first year of their course.
.. Not readily available.

Figures for non-advanced further education in Wales and Scotland and higher and further education in Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the schools which receive pupils paid for in whole or in part under the assisted places scheme in *(a)* Nottinghamshire and *(b)* Nottingham and the number of assisted place pupils each school had in 1987-8.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is as follows. In addition to the schools listed, Worksop college has been invited to join the APS from September 1989.

School name	[2]*Number*
Nottingham High school[1]	89
Nottingham High school for girls[1]	188

[1] Location: City of Nottingham.
[2] Assisted place holders 1987-88.

Teachers (Secondary Schools)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of teachers employed in secondary schools in the maintained sector who teach *(a)* religious education and *(b)* mathematics, together with the total number of pupils currently on roll in those schools; and if he will make a statement about the numbers coming forward for qualification as such teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Estimates from the 1984 secondary school staffing survey show 21,200 teachers of religious education and 40,500 teachers of mathematics in maintained secondary schools in England. A further such survey was conducted in 1988, and the results of this are expected to be available shortly.

In January 1984 there were 3,646,000 pupils on the rolls of maintained secondary schools in England, falling to 3,070,000 by January 1988.

The numbers of students commencing initial teacher training in secondary phase religious education and mathematics in England averaged 250 and 1,030 respectively for the three years 1986-88 (270 and 1,080 in England and Wales).

16 to 18-year-olds

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the *Official Report* figures to show *(a)* by standard region and *(b)* by local educationl authority (i) the numbers and percentage of 16-year-olds in full-time education, (ii) the numbers and percentage of 18-year-olds in full-time education, (iii) the numbers and percentage of 16-year-olds on approved training schemes and (iv) the numbers and percentage of 18-year-olds on approved training schemes for each of the last available five years.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 28 November at column *83*.

Information on training schemes is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Childcare Provision

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of further education have integral child care provision; what is the number of available places in each; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not held centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given to *(a)* the Universities Funding Council and *(b)* the Polytechnics Funding Council with regard to child care provision within the institutions for which they have responsibility.

Mr. Jackson: None. Child care provision is a matter for individual institutions.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the amount available for capital expenditure on schools and further education establishments in 1989-90, including the voluntary aided sector.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Local education authorities have today been informed of their allocations of prescribed expenditure for 1989-90, and of the allocations for capital spending by the governors of voluntary aided and special argeement schools in their area. The allocations are as follows:

Education capital expenditure 1989-90
Allocations for each local education authority

£ thousands

Local Education Authority	*Capital expenditure at county and controlled schools and further education establishments*	*Capital expenditure by the governors of aided and special agreement schools*
GREATER LONDON		
Barking	245	—
Barnet	996	1,392
Bexley	864	223
Brent	463	519
Bromley	663	5
Croydon	1,008	—
Ealing	540	12
Enfield	1,153	825
Haringey	2,275	331
Harrow	650	50
Havering	1,341	858
Hillingdon	644	306
Hounslow	529	—
Kingston upon Thames	316	21
Merton	5,243	300
Newham	3,590	15
Redbridge	2,028	575
Richmond upon Thames	540	358
Sutton	649	168
Waltham Forest	8,013	17
Inner London	11,957	2,367
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS		
West Midlands		
Birmingham	5,218	1,992
Coventry	2,670	572
Dudley	2,531	1,176
Sandwell	2,080	58
Solihull	744	425
Walsall	921	62
Wolverhampton	528	—
Merseyside		
Knowsley	2,116	152
Liverpool	607	2,060
St. Helens	1,851	3,564
Sefton	1,724	676
Wirral	2,469	2,173
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	1,286	250
Bury	605	1,221
Manchester	5,271	1,339
Oldham	2,272	1,816
Rochdale	2,175	1,189
Salford	3,806	290
Stockport	1,519	45
Tameside	746	30
Trafford	2,671	240
Wigan	1,364	515
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	270	—
Doncaster	684	8
Rotherham	840	—
Sheffield	5,211	153
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	8,334	473
Calderdale	2,607	275
Kirklees	808	5
Leeds	3,464	4,875
Wakefield	3,212	153
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	1,052	789
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,566	583
North Tyneside	1,577	774
South Tyneside	3,372	200
Sunderland	3,859	99
NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTIES		
Isles of Scilly	149	—
Avon	3,877	710
Bedfordshire	2,022	—
Berkshire	5,876	1,124
Buckinghamshire	7,780	17
Cambridgeshire	5,801	249
Cheshire	3,487	1,589
Cleveland	5,324	203
Cornwall	6,129	1,087
Cumbria	6,753	559
Derbyshire	11,669	401
Devon	14,177	226
Dorset	2,970	1,197
Durham	2,133	46
East Sussex	9,171	917
Essex	17,002	229
Gloucestershire	5,934	1,218
Hampshire	7,940	927
Hereford and Worcester	2,534	570
Hertfordshire	4,832	673
Humberside	7,288	352
Isle of Wight	1,628	300
Kent	8,610	934
Lancashire	13,664	4,734
Leicestershire	6,769	476
Lincolnshire	3,010	16
Norfolk	3,788	389
North Yorkshire	2,209	109
Northamptonshire	4,046	20
Northumberland	889	394
Nottinghamshire	3,215	237
Oxfordshire	3,758	64
Shropshire	4,943	120
Somerset	3,088	1,506
Staffordshire	4,927	822
Suffolk	6,086	232
Surrey	5,735	2,411
Warwickshire	1,729	631
West Sussex	1,966	839
Wiltshire	2,866	71

Voluntary aided and special agreement schools
Major projects to start in 1989-90
(Expenditure for 1989-90 is included in the Governors column of the main list)

Local education authority	*Name of school*	*Expenditure £'000s* 1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Brent	St. Margaret Clitheroe	90	95	—
Enfield	St. Mary's Primary	155	30	—
Haringey	St. Thomas More	293	1,900	860
Havering	St. Edward's CE Comprehensive	100	70	5
Merton	Cottenham Park CE Primary	128	54	—
Merton	Bishop Gilpin CE Primary	172	154	—
Sutton	St. Mary's	40	100	—
Sutton	All Saint's Benhilton	128	105	—
ILEA	St. Bede's/St. Bernadette	178	—	—
ILEA	Archbishop Tenison	42	328	44
Birmingham	St. John's CE	690	1,035	—
Coventry	St. Patrick's RC	10	175	15
Liverpool	Archbishop Beck	409	914	1,124
Liverpool	St. John Boscoe	224	1,493	1,119
Liverpool	King David	34	336	78
Sefton	Savio RC High	298	347	32
Bury	St. Mary's RC Radcliffe	19	191	45
Wigan	Standish Lower Ground CE Primary	65	215	40
Bradford	St. Andrew's CE First	183	496	454
Calderdale	St. Chad's	250	54	—
Leeds	Meanwood CE Primary	300	400	70
Avon	St. Joseph's RC	230	247	—
Berkshire	St. Bernard's Slough	601	296	—
Cheshire	Warrington, St. James CE	143	170	10
Cornwall	Mongleath, Falmouth	600	600	100
Cornwall	Sir Robert Geffery's	400	600	200
Derbyshire	St. Giles, Matlock	150	300	20
Derbyshire	St. George's New Mills	100	30	—
Derbyshire	William Gilbert, Duffield	100	100	5
Durham	St. Mary's, Blackhill	24	259	141
East Sussex	Aldrington CE Primary	250	950	70
East Sussex	St. Philip's, Uckfield	320	—	—
Gloucestershire	St. Peter's Phase I	67	560	53
Hampshire	Valley Park	450	220	—
Hampshire	Park Gate	178	841	116
Hampshire	Lymington	45	250	100
Hereford and Worcester	St. Mary's RC	520	90	—
Hertfordshire	St. Theresa's, Boreham Wood	137	4	—
Humberside	St. Mary's, Grimsby	73	130	20
Lancashire	Clayton-Le-Woods RC	75	510	35
Lancashire	Christ The King RC, Blackpool	10	100	10
Lancashire	Rishton St. Charles RC	32	319	74
Lancashire	St. John Vianney RC, Blackpool	10	100	10
Mount Carmel RC High, Lancashire		173	1,380	748
Northumberland	Berwick CE First	24	97	26
Staffordshire	St. Peter's CE, Stoke-on-Trent	20	140	—
Staffordshire	St. Edward's Leek	50	350	25
Warwickshire	St. Austin's Kennilworth	23	456	360
West Sussex	Cuckfield	47	763	381
Wiltshire	Alderbury	65	479	120

List of major aided projects for the 1989-90 design list

Local Education Authority	*Name of School*	*(Governors Fees) 1989-90 (£000's)*
Barnet	St. Agnes	35
Bradford	Baildon	30
Devon	Cuthbert Mayne Ph 2	66
Dorset	St. Clement's and St. John's	30
Hertfordshire	St. Clement Dane's	80
Kent	Ashford St. Mary's	24
Liverpool	St. John Almond	92
Oxfordshire	Blessed George Napier	20
Somerset	St. Augustine's, Taunton	54
Staffordshire	St. Peter's Cobridge	15

Antarctic Survey

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the environmental implications of the proposed new gravel airstrip to be built by the Natural Environment Research Council's British Antarctic Survey in the British Antarctic Territory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The British Antarctic Survey has made a thorough assessment of the consequences for the environment of the proposed new airstrip. NERC has submitted a comprehensive environmental evaluation to me and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I am placing copies in the Libraries of both Houses today. Further copies are available from NERC. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has circulated the evaluation to the consultative parties to the Antarctic treaty in accordance with recommendation XIV-2 of the treaty. Any comments received will be considered in preparing the final text of the report and be taken into account in

reaching final decisions about the construction of the airstrip. I commend this thorough report to hon. Members as further evidence of the Government's concern for the environment.

GCSE

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many constituents of the right hon. Member for Worthing have still not received their GCSE results; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The independent GCSE examining groups, which are responsible for issuing results, are not aware that any results for summer 1988 GCSE examinations are still outstanding. As in previous years, some results remain to be confirmed because they are the subject of appeals. The groups have undertaken to deal with these appeals as quickly as possible.

Meningitis

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report*, in tabular form, details of all research being carried out into meningitis with support from public funds, showing the name of the research worker, the title and duration of each project, the establishment at which it is being conducted, and the amount of research grant being provided.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Directly relevant research being supported by the MRC is set out in the table. Total expenditure on the projects under way in 1987-88 was £216,000; expenditure in 1988-89 will be at a higher level, but cannot be accurately estimated at this stage. The Department of Health is supporting a case study of meningococcal disease in eight west country health districts, co-ordinated by Dr. R. Stanwell-Smith, Bristol and Weston health authority. The amount of the grant is £38,100 and the duration, May 1988 to March 1990. Some support for research on meningitis is also provided through UGC block grants to universities.

Location	*Investigator*	*Project*	*Tenure*
MRC Clinical Research Centre Divison of Communicable Diseases	Head of Divison Dr. Taylor-Robinson	Pathogenesis and immunobiology of meningococcal infection	Commenced April 1984 and ongoing
MRC Clinical Research Centre Division of Communicable Diseases	Head of Divison Dr. Taylor-Robinson	Isoenzyme analysis for differentiation of *Neisseria meningitidis* infection	Commenced April 1988 and ongoing
University of Sussex School of Biological Sciences	Dr. B. G. Spratt	Molecular basis and molecular epidemiology of the emergence of penicillin resistance in *Neisseria meningitidis*	3 year support, yet to commence
Oxford University Paediatrics	Professor E. R. Moxon	Molecular basis of *Haemophilus influenza* Pathogenicity	April 1985—March 1990
Edinburgh University Bacteriology	Dr. Cecilia C. Blackwell	Secretor state and susceptibility to bacterial meningitis	September 1987—February 1989
Leicester University Microbiology	Dr. G. J. Boulnois	Genetic engineering of polysaccharides	January 1988—December 1990
Aberdeen University Bacteriology	Professor T. H. Pennington	Studies on the population genetics and typing of *Neisseria meningitidis*	April 1988—March 1991
Southampton University Microbiology	Dr. J. E. Heckels	Immunobiology of Meningococcal outer membrane proteins	August 1988—July 1991
University of Surrey Microbiology	Dr. J. J. McFadden	DNA probes to study epidemiology and virulence of *Neisseria meningitidis* infections	October 1988—September 1991

Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total number of home full-time and sandwich students in higher education in each year since 1979; what has been the total full-time equivalent number of part-time students in higher education in each year since 1979; and what has been the total number of home full-time entrants to universities in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jackson *[pursuant to his answer 28 November 1988]:* I regret that figures for full-time and sandwich students were in error and included non-United Kingdom-domiciled students. The corrected answer, which also includes final figures for part-time students in 1987, is therefore as follows:

Student numbers in Great Britain

thousands

	Academic year beginning in								
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Higher education United Kingdom domiciled									
Full-time and sandwich	451·2	465·0	488·4	504·6	517·5	525·1	530·6	540·0	549·7
Part-time	267·7	280·8	290·0	296·6	306·2	308·5	325·8	348·9	359·3
FTE[1] of part-time	93·7	98·3	101·5	103·8	107·2	108·0	114·0	122·1	125·7
United Kingdom domiciled entrants to university									
Undergraduate	75·7	77·4	74·0	71·5	69·2	70·5	70·3	70·7	72·5

[1] Defined as 35 per cent. of part-time students.

ENERGY

Chapelcross and Calderhall

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy pursuant to his answer of 8 December, what the appropriate share of decommissioning the nuclear power plants at Chapelcross and Calderhall will cost public funds over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The operator of the nuclear power plants at Chapelcross and Calder Hall does not expect them to be taken out of service over the next five years, so no contributions from public funds to the costs of decommissioning these facilities are expected to be made over that time.

Subsidence (Compensation)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive British Coal's annual report on the administration of the subsidence compensation scheme referred to in the Government's White Paper in response to the Waddilove report.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have now received this report from British Coal and have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses today.

WALES

Physically Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's response to the joint submission made in July by the Spastic Society and the Wales Council for the Disabled, on the need for an all-Wales physical handicap strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Our officials are still considering the issues raised by the discussion document and will be consulting these organisations and other relevant groups in due course.

Welsh National Opera

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received *(a)* from local authorities in Gwynedd and *(b)* from others, seeking Welsh Office support for the establishment of an arts centre at Llandudno to provide a north Wales base for Welsh National Opera; and what is his response on this matter.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received representations from Aberconwy borough council and Gwynedd county council and has also received 41 letters in support of the scheme since the beginning of the year.

Aberconwy borough council has been told that, whilst we see the attractions of the project and accept that Llandudno would be a suitable location for it, we have reservations about the financial aspect of the scheme as presented, not least the request that central Government should fund most of the cost.

The council has been invited to consider submitting revised proposals which would overcome these reservations.

School Governors

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to which local education authorities in Wales, in organising the election of school governors *(a)* afforded parents the opportunity to (i) post in nomination forms and (ii) vote by post and *(b)* told parents in writing of their rights to submit nominations or ballot papers by post, with an indication of the address to which they were to be posted and adequate time for this to take place; and if he will undertake a survey of the conduct of these elections in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The detailed information requested is not collected centrally.

Officials in the Department have been monitoring the process of reconstitution of school governing bodies by the local education authorities, and are satisfied that the majority of school governor elections have been conducted in accordance with the guidance which was issued on 27 July 1987 in Welsh Office Circular 12/87—"Education (No. 2) Act 1986: Further Guidance".

We have at present no plans to undertake a survey of the conduct of school governor elections in Wales.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1988 reported by the National Museum of Wales, includings its outstations, with the percentage change on the attendance figures for 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information will not be available until January when I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman.

Current Affairs Programmes (Presenters)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which presenters of current affairs programmes in Wales have been employed or commissioned to undertake freelance work by the Welsh Office or the Welsh Development Agency in the last two years; and on how many occasions.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the last two years, the Welsh Office has commissioned Mr. Vincent Kane to promote exporting to industrialists on two occasions. In the same period, the Welsh Development Agency employed Mr. John Humphrys to appear in a video to promote the development of financial services.

Elderly People

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans to issue circulars by local authorities on planning guidelines to meet the needs of an increasingly elderly population in Wales.

Mr. Grist: There are no plans at present to issue specific guidance on these matters.

Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has any plans to issue planning guidance in the form of circulars to local authorities on facilitating the provision of starter homes for young couples especially in rural areas;

(2) if he has any plans to issue planning guidance in the form of circulars to local authorities to facilitate the provision of housing for disabled persons;

(3) if he has any plans to issue planning guidance in the form of circulars to local authorities to facilitate the provision of housing for single people.

Mr. Grist: There are no plans at present to issue specific guidance on these matters.

Eggs

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of human salmonella infections were reported in Wales in each of the last three years; and how many were directly attributed to fresh hens' eggs.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of cases of salmonellosis in Wales is not available, but data on the number of reports of salmonellosis in Wales are given in the following table. These data include both cases and excretors. Information on how many of these reports were directly attributed to fresh hens' eggs is not available. However, it is known that, in 1988 to the end of October, there were in Wales five outbreaks of salmonellosis involving 44 people in which the likely source of infection was eggs:

Laboratory Reports of Salmonellosis from Wales to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre

Year	*Total Reports*
1985	450
1986	690
1987	746

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what investigations have been carried out by the public health laboratory service into outbreaks of salmonella enteriditis in Wales; how many hen eggs were sampled; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* The public health laboratory service has investigated three outbreaks of salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 in Wales during 1988. On each occasion foods containing shell eggs from hens were implicated as the vehicle of infection. In the one case where the source of supply could be identified 18 eggs were sampled, but the organism was not isolated.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the levels of rent arrears for each local authority for each month in 1987 and for each month to date in 1988.

Mr. Grist: Data relating to rent arrears are held centrally only on an annual basis. The information provided on the following table relates to the provisional outturn for 1987-88. It is based on each local authority's final collection period for that year.

Rent arrears at end of 1987-88

Authority	*Total rent arrears £*
Alyn and Deeside	91,800
Colwyn	66,616
Delyn	98,565
Glyndwr	84,664
Rhuddlan	46,000
Wrexham Maelor	285,020
Carmarthen	60,617
Ceredigion	53,367
Dinefwr	63,995
Llanelli	225,290
Preseli Pembs	119,022
South Pembroke	72,084
Blaenau Gwent	89,398
Islwyn	69,500
Monmouth	114,878
Newport	260,000
Torfaen	214,055
Aberconwy	90,000
Arfon	107,200
Dwyfor	15,614
Meirionnydd	27,407
Ynys Mon	126,761
Cynon Valley	81,600
Merthyr Tydfil	97,131
Ogwr	n.a.
Rhondda	100,425
Rhymney Valley	129,552
Taff Ely	197,503
Brecknock	44,597
Montgomeryshire	73,064
Radnor	11,000
Cardiff	413,122
Vale of Glamorgan	119,800
Port Talbot	n.a.
Lliw Valley	147,931
Neath	137,278
Swansea	402,582
Total Wales	4,337,438

Primary Health Care

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when discussions will begin with professional bodies and others on the primary health care initiative announced by him in the programme for the valleys.

Mr. Peter Walker: A consultation letter is to issue to all those with an interest before the recess, and I shall place the text in the Library of the House. The scheme will blend practical support for primary health care practitioners with advanced professional training initially for doctors and nurses together. It will aim to ensure that patients will be able to obtain a still wider and better managed range of services, well adapted to their needs and supportive of health promotion more generally. It will present a novel and significant opportunity for constructive development in practice team working, and in service partnership for patients. Subject to parliamentary approval I intend that just under £500,000 be made available for full year provision in support of the scheme. I hope that all of those involved will lend their efforts to help in realising the scheme's potential.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department issues any guidelines to local education authorities in Wales who are converting from sixth forms to tertiary colleges, concerning the need to have a tertiary facility through the Welsh language for pupils who would otherwise have progressed to sixth form study through the medium of Welsh.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 20 December]:* Welsh office Circular 20/88 "Educational Quality in Wales: The Response to Falling School Rolls", issued in June 1988, advised local education authorities to consider the alternative methods of provision, including tertiary colleges, when considering educational provision for 16-19 year olds. The circular advised that rationalisation proposals should take account of the place of Welsh in the curriculum to ensure continuity in, the learning of the language, both as a subject and as a medium of learning.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for the document entitled "You and the Community Charge", published by the Department of the Environment, to be available through the medium of the Welsh language in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my letter to him of 16 December which enclosed copies, both in English and in Welsh, of the brief guide to the community charge that has been available from the Welsh Office since last August. The publication "You and the Community Charge" refers only to England.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each district *(a)* the number of local housing authority tenants who receive housing benefit and *(b)* the number of housing association tenants who receive housing benefit.

Mr. Grist: The number of local housing authority tenants who were in receipt of housing benefit during 1987-88 is given in the table.

Information on the number of housing association tenants in each local authority district who receive housing benefit is not available.

Local Authority Tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit in 1987-1988

	Number
Aberconwy	2,220
Alyn and Deeside	4,300
Arfon	4,300
Blaenau Gwent	7,841
Brecknock	2,017
Cardiff	16,217
Carmarthen	2,369
Ceredigion	2,257
Colwyn	2,450
Cynon Valley	4,213
Delyn	3,857
Dinefwr	3,947
Dwyfor	1,115
Glyndwr	2,265
Islwyn	4,477
Llanelli	5,323
Lliw Valley	3,804
Meirionnydd	1,505
Merthyr Tydfil	5,843
Monmouth	3,404
Montgomery	2,245
Neath	4,518
Newport	10,400
Ogwr	8,017
Port Talbot	4,357
Preseli Pembrokeshire	4,387
Radnor	720
Rhondda	4,220
Rhuddlan	2,050
Rhymney Valley	8,237
South Pembrokeshire	2,261
Swansea	13,681
Taff-Ely	6,034
Torfaen	10,082
Vale of Glamorgan	4,776
Wrexham Maelor	9,593
Ynys Mon	4,462
Wales	183,764

House Purchase

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will identify the district councils which are eligible to apply for money available to local authorities in rural areas with a high concentration of second homes to purchase homes for sale or rent to local people; and whether this money will be by way of grant or loan.

Mr. Grist: All district authorities in rural areas with a high proportion of second homes are invited to apply for the £1 million extra funding available in 1989-90. The money will be made available by way of additional capital allocation and may be used to acquire property for rent or re-sale.

School Doctors and Dentists (Language)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance is given by his Department to health authorities in Wales concerning the need to ensure whenever possible that school doctors and dentists are capable of conversing with primary school children in their first language.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office Health Circular WHSC (IS) 117, a copy of which is available in the Library, recognises the importance of individuals being able to converse in their mother tongue during contract with the Health Service, and asks authorities to offer appropriate services wherever this would be reasonable and practicable.

STC (Redundancies)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account the Welsh Development Agency took, when awarding grants to STC and other companies which involved closure of a site elsewhere, of the consequent redundancies.

Mr. Peter Walker: Regional grant schemes in Wales are administered by the Welsh Office. Regional selective assistance is not normally made available to projects which involve the transfer of jobs from one part of Great Britain to another with no net increase in employment. Where a relocation project involves some net increase in employment in an assisted areas location, the transferred jobs are normally discounted for the purposes of assessing any RSA grant for which the project may be eligible.

Health and Personal Social Services

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has reached a decision about the allocation of resources for health and personal social services in Wales in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: Subject to parliamentary approval, I propose to allocate £1,315 million in 1989-90 to health

and personal social services in Wales. This represents a cash increase of £142 million over 1988-89 plans, and an increase of nearly £93 million over planned provision for 1989-90. The Health Service will have further additional spending power of nearly £19 million as a result of reduced superannuation contributions.

My proposals include £953 million for the hospital and community health services, an increase of £103 million over provision in 1988-90. I will announce allocations to individual health authorities as soon as possible. In addition to their allocations, health authorities will retain the benefit of cash released through cost improvement programmes, income from charges for the treatment of private patients and from income generation schemes, and receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings.

I am proposing a special allocation of over £6 million in support of developments under my programme for the valleys. My proposals will also make possible the further development of modern patterns of service for those with mental handicaps, elderly people and those suffering from mental illness; of breast and cervical cancer screening services; measures against AIDS; and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce allocations to district health authorities in 1989-90 announced by him in the programme for the valleys.

Mr. Peter Walker: District health authorities have today been informed that the following allocations are to be made under the programme for the valleys for projects commencing in 1989-90 and are shown in the following table.

Funding under the programme will enable health authorities significantly to advance the implementation of these schemes. All the applications made by health authorities for funding in 1989-90 have been met. In some instances the level of funding allocated under the programme has been greater than 50 per cent. of the anticipated expenditure in the year in order that the authority's contribution can be met from within the limits of its annual capital allocation. The level of funding in such cases will be balanced in any future tranches of programme allocations. Funding of individual schemes is subject to the outcome of any public consultation which may be appropriate.

These decisions represent a major investment in health care in deprived areas by my Department in partnership with the health authorities. It should yield a significant improvement in the environment and quality of health services offered to local people.

Consideration is also being given to a proposal for an innovative research project into improvements in domiciliary antenatal care which would be conducted in Mid Glamorgan and Gwent. A decision on the extent of any funding from the programme to this initiative will be taken in the light of discussions with the relevant health authorities and the proposers.

	Programme for the Valleys contribution in 1989-90 £
Mid Glamorgan	
1. Ystrad Fechan Community Hospital	1,600,000
2. 40 bed unit for elderly people, Aberdare General Hospital	600,000
3. Day unit at Tyntyla for elderly mentally ill people	75,000
4. "Know your Midwife" project, Rhondda	60,000
5. Community nursing staff	85,000
	2,420,000
Gwent	
1. Ebbw Vale Community Hospital	1,883,000
2. Blaina Hospital Rehabilitation Unit	154,000
3. Blackwood Psychiatric Unit	464,000
	2,501,000
East Dyfed	
Amman Valley Hospital	515,000
West Glamorgan	
Pontardawe Psychiatric Day Centre	15,000
	5,451,000

SOCIAL SECURITY

Transitional Benefits

71. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make a statement on the way in which transitional benefits payment is working.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The transitional payments unit is working very well and became fully operational on 14 July when the first payments were issued. Up to 13 December the unit had received 131,438 written inquiries, 71,088 telephone inquiries and 396,776 applications for housing benefit transitional payments. A total of 393,700 inquiry forms, requesting housing benefit details, have been issued to local authorities of which 330,414 have been returned. As soon as these inquiry forms are returned by authorities the unit is processing applications and so far 145,687 cases are receiving payments. The number of cases which have been found to be ineligible is 161,473. The unit has also processed 342 income support transitional payment cases of which 165 have resulted in payments being made.

Income Support

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total weekly income support for a married man with children aged four and six years if his income is *(a)* £50 per week, *(b)* £130 per week and *(c)* £160 per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is set out in the table. It is for families whose head is in full-time work and not eligible for income support.

The results are hypothetical, particularly as the family is assumed to pay average local authority housing charges. This masks the wide variety of rent and domestic rates that local authority tenants actually pay and need not reflect families' circumstances and their housing arrangements in these parts of the income distribution.

April 1988 benefit system: Average local authority rent and rates
Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	Earnings head		
	£50.00	£130·00	£160·00
Tax	0·00	12·81	20·31
National insurance	2·50	11·70	14·40
Take home pay	47·50	105·49	125·29
Family credit	44·20	6·37	0·00
Child benefit	14·50	14·50	14·50
Rent	19·90	19·90	19·90
Rent rebate	8·79	0·00	0·00
Rates	8·20	8·20	8·20
Rate rebate	3·14	0·00	0·00
Total net income	118·13	126·36	139·79
Net income after housing costs[1]	90·03	98·26	111·69

[1] Previously total income support [Tax benefit model tables November 1987].

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of families with children in Great Britain are expected to be *(a)* entitled to and *(b* claiming income support or family credit in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Legal entitlement to an income-related benefit can be established only when an individual puts in a claim. Reliable estimates of the number of people who may be eligible for one of the income-related benefits but who do not submit a claim are available only on an historical survey basis. For the latest available estimates I refer the hon. Member to pages 272-273 of Cm. 288—the 1988 Public Expenditure White Paper. Later estimates, for 1985, will become available in the new year. Estimates published in October 1987 suggested that around 1¼ million families with children, or just over one-fifth of the total in Great Britain, might claim income support or family credit in April 1988. Information providing estimates for 1989-90 will become available when the 1989 Public Expenditure White Paper is published.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently claiming income support in the borough of Blyth Valley.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The borough of Blyth Valley is served by the local office at Blyth but the boundaries are not conterminous. The number of people claiming income support at Blyth local office on 31 August 1988, the latest information available, was 7,785. This figure is provisional and subject to amendment.

Tax Allowances and Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the number of adults and children who would become eligible for benefit if (i) the annual personal allowance for income tax, (ii) the one-parent benefit, (iii) the child dependency addition and (iv) both (i) and (ii), were terminated; and how many adults and children would fall into the poverty and employment traps;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of adults and children in households which would become eligible for benefit if child benefit was to be terminated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Reliable estimates of the eligible population for the main income-related benefits, and of those who might be eligible for them as a result of major policy changes to child benefit, can be obtained only through historical survey data giving firm details of family size and composition, numbers of earners in the family, total incomes and employment status. Presently available sample data pre-date the social security reform introduced in April 1988. Eligible populations based on this information are therefore more than usually uncertain.

There is no precise definition of the "poverty trap". Receipt of income-related benefits raises marginal deductions from income. In general, and with the exception of crossing lower rate national insurance contribution thresholds, no one should now face deduction rates of 100 per cent. or more, as could occur under the previous system.

No precise numerical definition of the unemployment trap exists, but the effect of the changes specified in the question on the numbers whose incomes are similar when in and out of work are likely to be small.

Family Credit

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures giving expenditure on family credit and housing benefit paid to people above and below retirement age who are not in receipt of income support and the revenue received from the same people through income tax, national insurance contributions and local authority rates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Expenditure on family credit is running at the sorts of levels expected in Cm. 288—the 1988 public expenditure White Paper. Estimates of expenditure on reformed housing benefit will become available when the 1989 public expenditure White Paper is published. Reliable estimates of the kind specified in the question will be possible only when historical survey data on the numbers in receipt of the reformed income related benefits, along with corresponding information on incomes, earnings and local authority rates payments, are available. Even then, it is likely that the kind of information mentioned in the question could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Working Mothers

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the average increase in net weekly spending power of a working woman with two children of seven and 11 years for each extra £1 she earns if she increases her pay from *(a)* £40 to £50, *(b)* £50 to £60, *(c)* £60 to £70, *(d)* £70 to £80, *(e)* £80 to £90, *(f)* £90 to £100, *(g)* £100 to £110 and *(h)* £110 to £120 for both a married woman and a one-parent family.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to provide the precise information requested for a married woman because this will depend on the status and the total income of the tax unit as a whole.

For a lone parent the information is as follows:

Lone Parent, Two Children (Aged 7 and 11)
April 1988 Benefit System

Pay increase (£ per week)		Increase in net income after housing costs (£ per week)	Average increase for each £ of earnings (pence per week)
From	To		
40	50	1·13	11·3
50	60	1·64	16·4
60	70	2·43	24·3

Pay increase (£ per week) From	To	Increase in net income after housing costs (£ per week)	Average increase for each £ of earnings (pence per week)
70	80	2·69	26·9
80	90	2·04	20·4
90	100	2·04	20·4
100	110	1·38	13·4
110	120	1·98	19·8

Nurses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received from nursing organisations regarding changes in the social security payments scheme which affect their members; if he will list those organisations submitting representations; and what steps he proposes to take to remedy any difficulties;

(2) whether he has received any representations from the college of nursing dialysis and the transport nursing forum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Soon after the introduction of the income support scheme, we received a letter from one hon. Member which enclosed correspondence from the royal college of nursing dialysis and transplant nursing forum. We have no plans to change the premium structure for dialysis patients at the present time.

Supplementary Benefit/Income Support

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, if he will publish a table showing with regard to the payment of supplementary benefit or income support to people in independent residential care and nursing homes and for each year since 1979 including an estimate for the current year *(a)* the expenditure in current and constant prices, *(b)* the number of claimants, *(c)* the average payment in current and constant prices, *(d)* the proportion of residents in receipt of supplementary benefit/income support and *(e)* the ceiling payments for care support under supplementary benefit/income support at both current prices and constant prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd The information requested is in the tables. All figures in table 1 are estimates. Information on the proportion of residents receiving supplementary benefit/income support is not yet available beyond February 1986. Table 2 provides information from April 1985 when the current system of national limits was introduced.

Table 1

Supplementary Benefit (Income Support from April 1988) to people in Independent Residential Care Homes (RCH) and Nursing Homes (NH)

	Expenditure, £ million (current prices)	Expenditure, £ million (May 1988 prices[1])	Number of claimants (000s)	Numbers in RCH	Numbers in NH	Average Payment (£pw, current prices[1])	Average payment (£pw, May 1988 prices)	Proportion of residents receiving supplementary benefit percentage[1]
December 1979	10	18	12	—	—	16·0	33·1	14
December 1980	18	27	13	—	—	26·6	43·6	14
December 1981	23	31	13	—	—	34·0	50·5	13
December 1982	39	50	16	—	—	46·9	61·7	16
December 1983	104	127	26	—	—	76·9	92·9	23
December 1984	200	234	42	—	—	91·6	107·6	31
December 1985	348	385	70	55	15	95·6	105·8	44
February 1986	459	505	90	70	20	98·1	107·8	55
May 1987	671	699	117	85	32	110·3	115·0	—
May 1988	878	878	147	103	44	115·0	115·0	—

Notes:

[1] Estimated only

[2] Adjusted to constant prices on basis of RPI

[3] Where '—' appears, figures are not available

Table 2

Residential Care and Nursing Home Limits—April 1985-April 1988

Residential Care Category	April 1985		November 1985		July 1986		April 1987		April 1988	
	£ (current prices)	£ (May 1988 prices)	£ (current prices)	£ (May 1988 prices)	£ (current prices)	£ (May 1988 prices)	£ (current prices)	£ (May 1988 prices)	£ (current prices)	£ (May 1988 prices)
Elderly	110	123	120	133	125	136	130	136	130	131
Very Dependent or Blind Elderly	—	—	—	—	140	152	145	151	155	156
Mentally Ill	120	134	130	144	130	142	130	136	130	131
Drug/Alcohol	120	134	130	144	130	142	130	136	130	131
Mentally Handicapped	140	157	150	166	150	163	150	156	160	161
Physically Disabled under Pension Age	170	190	180	199	180	196	190	198	190	191

Residential Care Category	April 1985 £ (current prices)	April 1985 £ (May 1988 prices)	November 1985 £ (current prices)	November 1985 £ (May 1988 prices)	July 1986 £ (current prices)	July 1986 £ (May 1988 prices)	April 1987 £ (current prices)	April 1987 £ (May 1988 prices)	April 1988 £ (current prices)	April 1988 £ (May 1988 prices)
Other	110	123	120	133	125	136	130	136	130	131
Nursing Home Category										
Elderly	138·60	155·30	170	188	170	185	175	183	185	186
Mentally Ill	148·60	166·51	180	199	180	196	180	188	185	186
Drug/Alcohol	148·60	166·51	180	199	180	196	180	188	185	186
Mentally Handicapped	168·60	188·92	200	221	200	218	200	209	200	201
Physically Disabled under Pension Age	198·60	222·53	230	255	230	250	230	240	230	231
Terminally Ill	198·60	222·53	230	255	230	250	230	240	230	231

Aged Persons' Homes

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the numbers of people who have been removed from private aged persons' homes when their fees can no longer be met from income support payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that such information is not available.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing how much was spent on standard housing benefit for each year between 1982-83 and 1987-88 in 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table.

Standard housing benefit expenditure at 1987-88 prices

	£ million
1982-83	1,395
1983-84	1,666
1984-85	1,680
1985-86	1,754
1986-87	1,841
1987-88	1,829

Note:
The housing benefit scheme for standard cases did not begin until 1983-84. The information for 1982-83 is for rent and rate rebate and rent allowance schemes operated by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of claimants of housing benefit supplement in the week preceeding 4 April in each local authority area, and the number of claimants of housing benefit supplement for the subsequent week on a similar basis.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many new claims for housing benefit supplement were received at *(a)* the Pontefract and *(b)* the Castleford office from 1 November 1987 to 30 August 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only information available is that obtained from the housing benefit subsidy claims submitted by local authorities. It is not available for individual local offices. This information shows the number of housing benefit supplement cases in payment at 31 March in each year. The available returns for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 have been placed in the Library. Some figures for 1987-88 are provisional.

As part of our reform of social security, housing benefit supplement ceased to be paid on 1 or 4 April 1988. There will, therefore, be no cases in payment after these dates.

Castleford and Pontefract local offices deal with Wakefield metropolitan borough council. The Pontefract local office also deals with Selby district council. Both local authorities however deal with other local offices as well.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the saving in a full year of his decision to lower to 55 the age at which the abatement of unemployment benefit to occupational pensioners comes into force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate the saving to be about £65 million in a full year.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the wider implications for women who are entitled to back-payment of the invalid care allowance in consequence of the award of benefit by a Social Security commissioner in the case of Lucy Mabel Hood of Horsham.

Mr. Scott: As I said in my aswer to the right hon. Member on 9 December at column *385* we are considering carefully the wider implications of the commissioner's decision.

Social Fund

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of applications for social fund loans were successful in *(a)* Pontefract and *(b)* Castleford offices up to the last available date that figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the numbers, by month of applications processed for social fund loans together with the number and value of awards made is available in the Library.

Single Payments

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals to the Social Security appeal tribunals in Scotland were raised against refusal of single payments; how many of such appeals were successful; and what proportion the number which were successful is to the total number, showing in his answer the figures for each of the last 10 years prior to the abolition of single payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table gives the information required. Figures for the years 1978 and 1979 relate to discretionary payments called exceptional needs payments. Figures from 1980 are for single payments payable under the single payments regulations introduced in that year.

Year	*Total appeals (Scotland)*	*Number successful*	*Percentage successful*
1978	2,553	659	25·8
1979	2,127	660	31·0
1980	3,056	979	32·0
1981	3,889	961	24·7
1982	4,587	893	19·5
1983	5,545	1,181	21·3
1984	6,988	2,089	29·9
1985	9,734	3,073	31·6
1986	13,427	3,828	28·5
1987	22,822	6,368	27·9

Benefits (Appeals)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the average length of time which elapses between the date of refusal of a social security benefit and the determination of an appeal against such refusal taken to the Social Security appeal tribunal in Scotland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest administrative statistics on social security appeal tribunals for Scotland relate to appeals heard in the three months to March 1988, when the average time between lodgement of the appeal and the hearing was 25·9 weeks.

Child Benefit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people receive child benefit; and how many of these are currently paying income tax.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In Great Britain around 6·7 million families receive child benefit and around 5·2 million families with children pay income tax.

Child Tax Allowance

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the combined value of child tax allowance after clawback and family allowance or child benefit for families at *(a)* half average earnings, *(b)* average earnings, *(c)* twice average earnings and *(d)* five times average earnings in the years 1958, 1965, 1975, 1985 and the latest date available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Child support (1) for families with two children aged 11 or under, at April 1988 (2) values.

Families on:	*April 1958* £	*April 1965* £	*April 1975* £	*Nov. 1985* £	*April 1988* £
½ average earnings	3·52	4·00	12·48	15·44	14·50
average earnings	11·50	13·58	12·48	15·44	14·50
2 × average earnings	16·31	15·01	12·48	15·44	14·50
5 × average earnings	16·31	15·01	12·48	15·44	14·50

(1) The combined value of child tax allowance after clawback, and Family Allowance/Child Benefit.
(2) Based on the movement in the General Index of Retail Prices at April 1988.

Lower Paid Families (Tax Rates)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures for the numbers of lower paid families with and without children, whose marginal tax rates including benefit withdrawal will be *(a)* 90 to 100 per cent., *(b)* 80 to 90 per cent., *(c)* 70 to 80 per cent., *(d)* 60 to 70 per cent., *(e)* 50 to 60 per cent., *(f)* 40 to 50 per cent., assuming that in 1989-90 personal tax allowances are raised in line with inflation and the basic rate of tax is maintained at 25 per cent.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 14 December at column *589*.

Housing Benefit (War Widows)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those local authorities who do not use their discretion under secton 28(6)*(a)* of the Social Security Act 1986 to disregard war widows's pensions in assessing housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the informaton is not available.

Staff Reductions

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the anticipated reductions in his Department's staff numbers by local offices in Scotland due to implementation of new technology and operational strategy.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The staffing reductions flowing from the implementation of operational strategy in local offices in Scotland are currently expected to be, 1,193 posts between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1992. Local office by office savings are not available centrally.

Official Publications

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 12 December to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, *Official Report*, column *454*, whether his Department has any policy regarding the use of statements which may be the subject of political debate or controversy in its official publications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department's policy is to use objective and factual statements in all official publications.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Further Education

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether the salaries paid to lecturers in further education colleges in Northern Ireland contain an element in respect of unsocial working hours;

(2) whether lecturers undertaking evening work receive any additional allowance in salary.

Dr. Mawhinney: The remuneration of lecturers is laid down in the nationally agreed conditions of service. Salaries of full-time lecturers are paid in respect of their contracted hours. Any additional teaching hours undertaken, including evening work, are paid at the hourly rate appropriate to the level of the course.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance is given by the Department of Education, Northern Ireland to principals of colleges or staff responsible for timetabling in colleges regarding the desirability of sharing evening classes among staff in each department rather than allocating evening classes to the same member of staff annually.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. This is a matter for college management to determine.

Ulster museum

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the attendance figures for 1988 reported by the Ulster museum, including its outstations, with the percentage change on the attendance figures for 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is estimated that about 320,100 people will have visited the Ulster museum and the Armagh County museum in 1988, an increase of almost 20 per cent. on the attendance figure for 1987.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is: *(a)* the total amount of money allocated to the National Health Service in Northern Ireland for nurses' pay and *(b)* the amount allocated to each health board for nurses' pay in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Needham: Allocations are made to boards to enable them to deliver the full range of health and personal social services. The setting of budgets within allocations is a matter for boards; provision for nurses pay is not separately identified within the allocations. However, total expenditure on nurses' pay in 1987-88 was £185 million.

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify the total amount of additional money allocated to Northern Ireland on the basis of the Government's announcement of extra funding for the clinical regrading exercise.

Mr. Needham: Northern Ireland's share of the extra funding for the clinical regrading exercise was £5·4 million. This was in addition to the initial allocation of £18·5 million made following the review body annquncement.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the reasons for delays in the issuing of appeal results to nurses in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: No formal appeals have been heard in Northern Ireland. When requested, the grades of some nurses are being reviewed informally and the outcomes of these reviews are being notified to nurses as quickly as possible.

Mr. Jim Marshall To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total amount of money allocated to the National Health Service in Northern Ireland for the implementation of clinical regrading.

Mr. Needham: The total provision for nurses pay has been increased by £32·2 million in the current year compared with 1987-88.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to allow individual nurses in Northern Ireland an opportunity to set down the work they do as part of the clinical grading review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The clinical grading exercise in Northern Ireland was carried out by line managers and when the job content of a nurse's post was not known nurses were asked to provide details of the work they did. Those nurses who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the grading exercise may ask for their grading to be reviewed and at this stage they have the opportunity to submit full details of the work they do.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money *(a)* in cash figures and *(b)* as percentages of nursing budgets is estimated as necessary by the initial National Health Service clinical grading exercise for Northern Ireland as a whole and for each of the four health boards.

Mr. Needham: The initial provision for the clinical grading exercise based on the recommendations of the review body was for an average overall increase in costs, outside London, of 14·5 per cent. The amounts for each board were:

	£ million
Northern	4·2
Southern	4·1
Eastern	13·6
Western	4·2

The total for Northern Ireland including the national board for nursing, midwifery and health visiting is £26·8 million.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the initial National Health Service grading exercise has now been imposed on nurses in Northern Ireland without prior consultation with either the nurses concerned or their staff organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The clinical grading criteria, recommended by the nurses pay review body and accepted in full by the Government, have been applied to nurses in Northern Ireland following full consultation and with the agreement of the staff representatives on staff side of the Northern Ireland staffs joint council for nurses and midwives.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to ensure that the imposition of grades on nurses in Northern Ireland complies with the requirements of the Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970, the Sex Discrimination Order (NI) 1976 and the Fair Employment Act (NI) 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The implementation of the clinical grading structure in Northern Ireland is a matter for health and social services boards as employing authorities. I am satisfied that boards have had due regard to existing legislation in carrying out this task.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the amount of money set aside for successful grading appeals *(a)* within the total allocation for the Health Service in Northern Ireland and *(b)* within each of the health board's allocations.

Mr. Needham: The funds being allocated to area boards etc—which include £32·2 million as the assessed cost of the clinical grading review—are intended to cover all pay costs arising in the current financial year, including any costs arising from successful appeals.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of people receiving invalidity benefit by convenient area unit in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 1 December 1988 the number of people receiving invalidity benefit in Northern Ireland was 46,898. The benefit is administered centrally and a breakdown of this figure by local area within Northern Ireland is not available.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of people receiving retirement pensions by convenient area unit in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 13 December 1988 the number of people receiving retirement pension in Northern Ireland was 212,373. The benefit is administered centrally and a breakdown of this figure by local area within Northern Ireland is not available.

Expenditure

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing his Department's expenditure headings with the amount spent in each year from 1979 to the current date.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* Information is only available in a consistent format for the years 1982-83 to 1988-89 and can be found in Cm 288-II table 18.1. The figures for the years 1979-80 to 1981-82 are not strictly comparable with those for the more recent years. Figures for 1981-82 are shown in Cm 56-II table 3.18, for 1980-81 in Cm 9702-II table 3·18, and for 1979-80 in Cm 9428-II table 3.17. It should be noted, however, that a major restructuring of the programmes of Northern Ireland Departments took place prior to the 1987 public expenditure White Paper and as a result it is not possible to provide meaningful information for the individual programmes of Northern Ireland Departments prior to 1981-82. In addition, no figures are available for national agriculture and fishery support prior to 1981-82 and therefore the totals for 1979-80 and 1980-81 for Northern Ireland Departments, Northern Ireland block and Northern Ireland programme exclude this element.

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what *(a)* resources and *(b)* guidelines he has made available to (i) hospital authorities and (ii) community care agencies for the treatment of AIDS sufferers.

Mr. Mellor: In 1986-87 the Government made available additional central funding of £2·5 million and in 1987-88 £25·1 million as a contribution towards the additional costs of providing treatment and care for people infected with HIV and with AIDS. This year we have allocated over £58 million to help develop preventive, counselling and diagnostic services and as a further contribution towards the costs of care and treatment in hospitals and in the community for people with AIDS; £2 million of this has been made available to the social services departments of inner London boroughs, where the great majority of people with HIV infection and AIDS are living.

We have announced that, for 1989-90, a total of almost £130 million will be available towards the costs of HIV-related prevention, care and treatment.

We have issued policy aims and service objectives for HIV-related services in health circulars setting out planning guidelines for the NHS. These were HC(86) 2, issued in January 1986, HC(87) 7, issued in March 1987 and HC(88) 43, issued in July 1988.

A list of the guidelines issued by the Government is as follows.

AIDS—General Information for Doctors. (Booklet 1, (CMO(85)7)). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—May 1985.

Information For Doctors Concerning The Introduction of the HTLV III Antibody Test. (Booklet 2) (CMO(85)12)). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—October 1985.

Guidance For Surgeons, Anaethetists, Dentists and their Teams in Dealing with Patients Infected with HTLV III. (Booklet 3, (CMO(86)7)). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—April 1986.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, (AIDS) and Artificial Insemination—Guidance for Doctors and A.I. Clinics. (Booklet 4, (CMO(86)12)). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—July 1986.

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens—LAV/HTLV III—The Causitive Agent of AIDS and Related Conditions. Health Departments and Health and Safety Executive—June 1986.

Information and Guidance on AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) for Local Authority Staff (LASSL(86)8). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—July 1986.

AIDS—The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and HIV: The AIDS Virus. (CMO(86)18). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—December 1986.

Children at School and Problems Related to AIDS. (CMO(86)10). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—June 1986.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) And Employment—(Booklet). Issued by Department of Employment and Health and Safety Executive—1986.

Children at School and Problems Related to AIDS (Booklet). Issued by Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office—March 1986.

AIDS—Some Questions and Answers. For Teachers, Lecturers and Youth Workers (Booklet). Issued by Department of Education and Science 1987.

AIDS: HIV Infected Health Care Workers (ISBN 011 3211406). Issued by Department of Health and Social Security—March 1988.

Cervical Smears

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North, *Offical Report*, 8 December, columns *336-37*, what is the current average waiting period in north Staffordshire for cervical smears.

Mr. Mellor: The current average period from receipt by north Staffordshire's laboratory of a routine cervical smear to a report being sent to the doctor who submitted the smear is four to five weeks. I understand that women in north Staffordshire have no difficulty in obtaining a cervical smear as part of the district's screening programme, in line with our guidance that women aged 20-64 should be tested at least every five years.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for the past five year period of those in England and Wales who have applied for licences to run residential homes, shown broken down by regional health authority areas in which the homes were situated.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally.

Salmonella (Eggs)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many salmonella infected eggs were discovered during routine testing at *(a)* the Government's research station at Colindale and *(b)* other public or private testing establishments during the past two years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) and my hon. Friend for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 20 December.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of salmonella poisoning directly attributable to eggs have led to deaths in each of the past five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The table shows the number of cases of bacteraemia (blood poisoning) due to salmonella reported by laboratories to the public health laboratory service.

Year	*Total Salmonella Bacteraemia*		*S. enteritidis Bacteraemia*		*S. enteritidis PT4 Bacteraemia*	
	Cases	*Deaths*[1]	*Cases*	*Deaths*[1]	*Cases*	*Deaths*[1]
1984	203	33	17	3	1	—
1985	151	30	30	9	9	3
1986	192	21	43	5	19	4
1987	226	35	61	15	26	9
1988 to October	237	48	120	26	87	23

[1] Deaths known to have occurred among these cases.

There is no direct evidence to link these deaths with the consumption of eggs but salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 (PT4) is associated almost exclusively with chicken and eggs and we must assume that some of the deaths in the final column will have been associated with eggs.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence his Department has of infection of hens' eggs by transmission of salmonella species in the oviduct; and what species are involved.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on 16 December at column *766*.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of human gastroenteritis caused by species of salmonella were reported in the last three years; what species were involved; and how many were directly attributed to fresh hens' eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information available is as follows:

Salmonella in humans
England and Wales

Year	*Serotype Typhimurium*	*Serotype Enteritidis*	*Other serotypes*	*Total*
1986	7,094	4,771	5,111	16,976
1987	7,660	6,858	6,014	20,532
1988[1]	5,488	13,004	4,546	23,038

[1] To end October.

It is not possible to attribute all cases to a specific food vehicle but we know that, to the end of October 1988 there were 46 reported outbreaks involving over 1,000 people in which the likely source of infection was eggs.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons, as a result of salmonella in eggs, have been *(a)* admitted to hospital, *(b)* classified as seriously ill and *(c)* have died, in 1988 and each of the previous 10 years; and how many patients are currently (i) in hospital and (ii) seriously ill as a result of salmonella poisoning by eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* We cannot separately identify, from data collected centrally, the information requested on hospital admissions and the numbers of seriously ill.

Some information is available on the numbers of cases and deaths from salmonellosis bacteraemias reported by laboratories to the Public Health Laboratory Service as follows:

Reports of salmonellosis bacteraemias (England and Wales)

	Total salmonella bacteraemias[1]		*S. enteritidis bacteraemias*			
	Cases	*Deaths*[2]	*Cases*	*(PT4)*	*Deaths*	*(PT4)*[2]
1983	201	30	14	(4)	5	(2)
1984	203	33	17	(1)	3	(—)
1985	151	30	30	(9)	5	(3)
1986	192	21	43	(19)	5	(4)
1987	226	35	61	(26)	15	(9)
1988[3]	237	48	120	(87)	26	(23)

[1] Excluding S. typhi/paratyphi.
[2] Deaths known to have occurred among these cases.
[3] To end October.

We do not have earlier information readily available.

There is no direct evidence to link these deaths with the consumption of eggs, but salmonella enteritidis phage type 4(PT4) is associated almost exclusively with chicken and eggs and we must assume that some of the deaths shown in the final column will have been associated with eggs.

Salmonella

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the reported outbreaks of salmonella poisoning over the last eight years were in *(a)* the home, *(b)* hospitals and *(c)* catering establishments; and what was the relationship of each of these outbreaks to refrigeration.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* Between 1980 and 1985 there were 2,187 reported outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning concerning private houses; 125 concerning hospitals and 303 concerning catering establishments—restaurants and receptions. Figures for 1986 and 1987 are not yet available in verified form. We have no information on the relationship of refrigeration to these outbreaks.

Transplants

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the major countries where organ transplant surgery is practised, giving a summary of the legal provisions which apply to the donation of organs in each country.

Mr. Freeman: We do not collect comprehensive information on the legal provisions which apply to organ donation in other countries. The hon. Member may, however, wish to consult a report published in 1987 by the Council of Europe, copies of which are in the Library. The report is entitled "Organ Transplantation: current legislation in Council of Europe member states and Finland, and results of European co-operation" (reference MSN-3-4).

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the availability of *(a)* hearts, *(b)* livers, *(c)* pancreases, *(d)* kidneys, *(e)* lungs and *(f)* eyes for transplant surgery;

(2) how many patients are waiting for transplant operations of *(a)* heart, *(b)* liver, *(c)* pancreas, *(d)* kidney, *(e)* lung and *(f)* cornea, respectively; and what is the maximum and minimum waiting time for such operations;

(3) if he will make a statement on the shortfall between organs available for transplant and the need for such organs; and if he will indicate how many potential recipients are likely to die because donor organs are not available, over the most convenient period.

Mr. Freeman: The number of organs available for transplant fluctuates significantly from time to time. The balance between the need for organs and the number available also varies, depending on such factors as whether a suitable match between recipient and donor can be found. In general terms, however, the shortage of cadaveric organs is most acute in the case of kidneys.

United Kingdom waiting lists, as notified to the United Kingdom transplant service (UKTS) on 25 November 1988 were:

	Number
Heart or heart/lung	396
Liver	44
Kidney	3,491
Cornea	581

Transplants of pancreases or lungs are rare, except when combined with the transplant of another organ. Only a proportion of patients waiting for corneal transplants are registered with UKTS; the waiting list does not therefore reflect the full national demand. Figures are not readily available on maximum and minimum waiting times.

The main purpose of kidney transplantation is not to save life but to improve its quality for those who would otherwise rely on dialysis. Heart and liver patients may on occasions die while waiting for a suitably matched organ but, because the availability of organs is inpredictable and the condition of individual patients awaiting transplantation will vary, no useful estimate can be made of the numbers likely to be involved in the future.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will quantify the benefits of transplant surgery in terms of *(a)* additional years lived *(b)* quality of life for recipients and *(c)* savings to the National Health Service on the treatment of continuing illness, for each of *(a)* heart, *(b)* liver, *(c)* pancreas, *(d)* kidney, *(e)* lung and *(f)* cornea.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that we do not have available information in the form requested. Some information on heart transplants is given in "Costs and Benefits of the Heart Transplant Programmes at Harefield and Papworth Hospitals" (DHSS research report No. 12, 1985) which is available in the Library. Graft survival has steadily improved since this study was carried out.

For information on the survival of kidney transplants, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) on 19 December. An article by Wood, Mallick and Wing published in the *British Medical Journal* on 6 June 1987 (Volume 294) suggested that each successful kidney transplant saved the National Health Service £30,000 compared with the cost of renal dialysis.

We are not aware of similar studies of the costs and benefits of other forms of transplantation.

Children (Cleveland)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to *(a)* how many families in total were involved in the events in Cleveland reported on by Justice Butler-Sloss, *(b)* how many children were taken into care during the period examined and *(c)* how many of those children are still in care.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we do not hold the information requested centrally. My hon. Friend may like to contact Cleveland county council.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will be in a position to announce regional allocation figures for the recent increases in National Health Service expenditure.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Spending in the hospital and community health service in England will increase by £1·1 billion in 1989-90, with over £1 billion going to regional health authorities as part of their initial allocations. This will be supplemented by some £175 million from new cost-improvement schemes and higher income generation receipts.

Regional health authorities' main allocations will increase in 1989-90 by an average of 2·7 per cent. in real terms. This substantial increase will be distributed so that all regions benefit to the largest possible extent. No region will receive less than 7·7 per cent., or 2·5 per cent. in real terms, an increase well above the figures authorities have so far been using in planning next year's service growth. Some regions, especially those with growing populations, will get slightly more because otherwise they would move away from their resource allocation working party target.

In addition to the increase in main allocations an extra £68 million will be provided for the fight against AIDS, bringing the total central provision to £130 million. As a result we will not only continue to underpin the cost of treatment and care but will give a major boost to work on prevention.

A total of £7·8 million will be provided separately for the costs of the new measles, mumps and rubella vaccine following the successful introductory campaign. The waiting list fund will go into its third year in 1989-90, and a further £30 million has been set aside for distribution to regional health authorities. A sum of £49 million will be provided for expenditure on specialised high technology services provided from a few national centres (supra-regional services). The breast cancer screening programme will be supported with an additional £11 million.

In addition, main capital allocations will increase by £85 million to £730 million. The increase will be distributed using the RAWP formula. Land sales are forecast to raise £290 million. Together these sums will more than sustain the hospital building and improvement programme which already includes over 500 schemes each costing over £1 million at various stages of planning, design and construction.

Details of the increases in authorities' revenue and capital allocations in 1989-90 are shown in the tables.

Revenue allocations to regional health authorities 1989-90

(£ million)

Regional Health Authority	*Main allocation*[1] *Cash increase*	*Percentage real terms increase*	*Supra regional services*	*Service increment for teaching*[2]	*AIDS*[3]	*Measles mumps and rubella vaccine*[4]	*Breast cancer screening*[5]	*Total cash increase*[6]
Northern	59·2	2·5	0·3	0·8	3·4	0·5	0·6	64·7
Yorkshire	66·7	2·5	0·4	1·1	4·4	0·6	0·8	73·9
Trent	85·3	2·9	0·1	2·3	5·3	0·7	1·0	94·8
East Anglian	38·1	3·1	1·5	2·3	2·2	0·3	0·3	44·7
North West Thames	64·9	2·5	1·1	1·5	4·8	0·6	0·7	73·6
North East Thames	80·9	2·5	0·2	2·8	5·2	0·7	0·8	90·5
South East Thames	72·4	2·5	0·8	1·8	5·4	0·6	0·8	81·8
South West Thames	60·0	2·5	0·1	0·8	3·7	0·5	0·5	65·5
Wessex	49·7	2·5	0·2	0·5	3·5	0·5	0·5	54·8
Oxford	46·1	3·8	0·3	0·4	3·0	0·4	0·4	50·7
South Western	59·2	2·5	0·0	0·9	4·3	0·5	0·6	65·5
West Midlands	96·2	2·6	2·1	0·8	5·7	0·9	1·3	106·9
Mersey	47·2	2·5	0·2	0·4	2·9	0·4	0·5	51·6
North Western	81·1	2·5	0·6	1·3	5·2	0·7	0·9	89·7
Total Regional Health Authorities	907·0	2·7	7·8	17·7	58·9	7·8	9·7	1,008·8

Notes:

[1] Includes share of £237 million savings resulting from the reduction in employers' superannuation contributions.

[2] Cash increase shown in 1989-90 current SIFT over actual 1988-89 SIFT.

[3] £68 million extra is available for AIDS bringing the total provision in 1989-90 to £129·53 million. The table shows the additional funds health authorities will receive above this year's allocation. Some of the additional £68 million will be allocated to other hospital and community health services groups, for example, the Public Health Laboratory Services Board.

[4]Sum shown is each Region's share of £7·8 million available.
[5]The additional funds available for breast cancer screening total £11 million. A further £1·347 million will be allocated later.
[6]Total cash/percentage increase shown includes each Region's share of £237 million savings resulting from the reduction in employers' superannuation contributions.
[7]Real terms increases have been calculated using the forecast GDP deflator.
[8]Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Capital allocations to regional health authorities 1989-90

Regional Health Authority	*Per cent. share*	*Cash £ million*
Northern	6·5	47·5
Yorkshire	7·9	57·4
Trent	9·6	70·3
East Anglian	4·1	30·1
North West Thames	6·4	46·7
North East Thames	7·2	52·9
South East Thames	7·5	54·5
South West Thames	6·2	45·0
Wessex	6·8	49·4
Oxford	4·7	34·0
South Western	7·2	52·3
West Midlands	11·6	84·7
Mersey	4·9	36·1
North Western	9·4	69·0
Total	100·0	729·9

Note:
Figures in the table exclude allocations for "top sliced" funding such as support for teaching hospital schemes, supra regional services, dental hospital re-equipment, inner cities bias, and projects funded jointly by health authorities and local authorities or voluntary bodies.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of National Health Service expenditure was used for *(a)* staff wages, *(b)* salaries, *(c)* fees and *(d)* expenses for the latest available year.

Mr. Mellor: Following are figures for items of current and capital expenditure derived from the summarised accounts of health authorities in England for 1987-88.

At this stage the figures are provisional in that they are subject to audit.

	£'000s	*Proportion of total current expenditure Per cent.*
Salaries and wages		
National Health Service staff	8,253,988	73·2
Non-National Health Service staff (agency, etc.)	211,436	1·9
Travelling and subsistence expenses	167,952	1·5
Removal expenses	23,290	0·2
Capital Expenditure 1987-88		
Salaries and wages, etc. of staff of professional and technical departments (works, etc.) charged to capital account:		
National Health Service staff	35,877	3·6
Non-National Health Service staff (agency, etc.)	2,449	0·2
Professional design consultants fees (architects, quantity surveyors, etc.)	77,117	7·7

Source:
Annual accounts of regional and district authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Numbers of old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988:
Trent RHA

Previous grade	*Staff in post*[1]	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade*								
		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*[2]G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Auxiliary	9,076·50	8,209·54	856·96	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	217·92	—	208·36	9·56	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[3]	6,379·63	—	—	2,749·84	3,129·68	499·11	1·00	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[3]	340·97	—	—	—	338·97	2·00	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[3]	371·99	—	—	4·40	223·29	142·09	2·21	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[3]	6,632·21	—	—	—	1,544·90	4,649·31	438·00	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[3]	701·90	—	—	—	115·14	577·67	9·09	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[3]	395·20	—	—	—	—	81·84	305·90	6·46	1·00	—
Nursing Sister II[3]	3,801·63	—	—	—	—	—	1,726·45	1,956·47	114·71	4·00
Midwifery Sister II[3]	873·51	—	—	—	—	—	261·20	609·81	2·50	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[3]	1,066·06	—	—	—	—	—	2·45	1,054·61	9·00	—
Nursing Sister I	57·99	—	—	—	—	—	3·37	23·82	26·80	4·00
Midwifery Sister I	19·00	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	18·00	—	—
Health Visitor	878·35	—	—	—	—	—	—	870·75	7·60	—
Senior Nurse 8	331·48	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	59·13	177·35	93·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	38·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	13·00	13·00
Senior Nurse 7	300·40	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	37·60	257·80
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	36·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13·00	23·93
Clinical Teacher	154·56	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	151·56	—
Fieldwork Teacher	121·65	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	0·53	120·12	—
Practical Work Teacher	157·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	154·80	—
Tutor	197·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	196·93
Tutor Midwife	45·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	45·16
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	282·00	—	—	282·00	—	—	—	—	—	—

Previous grade	Staff in post[1]	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade: A	B	C	D	E	F	[2]G	H	I
Staff Nurse	938·50	—	—	—	882·50	44·00	2·00	10·00	—	—
Deputy Sister	8·00	—	—	—	—	4·00	4·00	—	—	—
Sister II	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	15·00	1·00	—	—
Others	28·11	3·27	1·80	—	0·64	4·21	0·74	7·45	2·00	8·00
TOTALS	33,469·38	8,212·81	1,067·12	3,055·80	6,235·12	6,004·23	2,775·41	4,641·03	832·04	645·82

[1] Whole-time equivalents.
[2] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[3] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in the Pontefract district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Pontefract

Previous grade	Old code	Staff in post[1]	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade: A	B	C	D	E	F	[2]G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	NB01/11	214·90	204·40	10·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	NB21	10·40	—	10·40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[3]	NB31	236·50	—	—	158·00	76·50	2·00	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[3]	NB31	12·00	—	—	—	12·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[3]	NB61	7·30	—	—	—	7·30	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[3]	NB41-61	148·40	—	—	—	44·40	104·00	—	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[3]	NB61	43·00	—	—	—	7·00	36·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[3]	NB71	12·00	—	—	—	—	6·00	6·00	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[3]	NB81/91	132·90	—	—	—	—	—	52·00	77·90	3·00	—
Midwifery Sister II[3]	NB91	50·00	—	—	—	—	—	19·00	30·00	1·00	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[3]	NB91	34·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	34·00	—	—
Nursing Sister I	NC01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Midwifery Sister I	NC01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	NX01	33·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	32·50	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	NT01	5·70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·70	4·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	NT01	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	2·00
Senior Nurse 7	NT06	11·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	10·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	NT06	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00
Clinical Teacher	NW01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	NW01	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	NB91	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—
Tutor	NW11	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00
Tutor Midwife	NW11	2·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·50
Post Basic Students											
Enrolled	NB31	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	NB61	3·00	—	—	—	1·00	2·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	NB71	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	NB91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	NB00	33·00	—	—	—	29·00	—	—	—	—	4·00
TOTALS		1,009·10	204·40	20·90	158·00	177·20	150·00	77·00	174·00	18·70	28·50

[1] Whole Time Equivalents.
[2] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[3] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Leicestershire district health authority.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Leicestershire

Previous grade	Old code	Staff in post[1]	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G[2]	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	NB01/11	1,523·84	1,331·68	192·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	NB21	39·43	—	39·43	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[3]	NB31	1,188·50	—	—	479·61	553·12	155·77	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[3]	NB31	97·71	—	—	—	96·71	1·00	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[3]	NB61	69·08	—	—	—	47·49	21·59	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[3]	NB41-61	1,106·01	—	—	—	279·74	742·89	83·38	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[3]	NB61	122·50	—	—	—	2·32	120·18	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[3]	NB71	112·79	—	—	—	—	2·00	108·18	2·61	—	—
Nursing Sister II[3]	NB81/91	505·58	—	—	—	—	—	181·46	306·32	17·80	—
Midwifery Sister II[3]	NB91	104·15	—	—	—	—	—	6·60	97·55	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[3]	NB91	268·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	267·36	1·00	—
Nursing Sister I	NB01	5·08	—	—	—	—	—	0·84	4·24	—	—
Midwifery Sister I	NB01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	NX01	165·40	—	—	—	—	—	—	164·40	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	NT01	53·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20·00	33·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	NT01	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	7·00
Senior Nurse 7	NT06	49·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	49·80
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	NT06	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00
Clinical Teacher	NW01	21·19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21·19	—
Fieldwork Teacher	NW01	31·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	31·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	NB91	35·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35·00	—
Tutor	NW11	34·64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	34·64
Tutor Midwife	NW11	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00
Post Basic Students											
Enrolled	NB31	94·00	—	—	94·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	NB61	206·00	—	—	—	206·00	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	NB71	3·00	—	—	—	—	3·00	—	—	—	—
Sister II	NB91	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	9·00	—	—	—
Others	NQOD	7·53	1·06	—	—	—	3·28	0·74	2·45	—	—
TOTALS		5,868·59	1,332·74	231·59	573·61	1,185·38	1,049·71	390·20	844·93	129·99	130·44

[1] Whole Time Equivalents.
[2] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[3] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in the Central Nottinghamshire district health authority.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Central Nottinghamshire

Previous grade	Old code	Staff in post[1]	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
			A	B	C	D	E	F	[2]G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	NB01/11	576·43	550·20	26·23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	NB21	8·40	—	8·40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[3]	NB31	389·51	—	—	245·25	131·65	11·61	1·00	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[3]	NB31	38·00	—	—	—	38·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[3]	NB61	27·45	—	—	3·00	15·45	9·00	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[3]	NB41-61	391·65		—	—	—	83·41	270·25	37·99	—	—
Staff Midwife[3]	NB61	47·42	—	—	—	10·64	36·78	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[3]	NB71	28·57	—	—	—	—	1·00	26·57	—	1·00	—
Nursing Sister II[3]	NB81/91	259·02	—	—	—	—	—	111·82	128·20	18·00	1·00
Midwifery Sister II[3]	NB91	66·63	—	—	—	—	—	7·37	59·26	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[3]	NB91	49·91	—	—	—	—	—	—	49·91	—	—
Nursing Sister I	NB01	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—	3·00	1·00
Midwifery Sister I	NB01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	NX01	58·05	—	—	—	—	—	—	57·05	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	NT01	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	NT01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	NT06	18·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	17·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	NT06	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00
Clinical Teacher	NW01	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	10·00	—
Fieldwork Teacher	NW01	7·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·80	—
Practical Work Teacher	NB91	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—
Tutor	NW11	7·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·80
Tutor Midwife	NW11	2·66	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·66

Previous grade	Old code	Staff in post[1]	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade A	B	C	D	E	F	[2]G	H	I
TOTALS		2087·30	550·20	34·63	277·25	327·15	330·64	186·75	296·42	51·80	32·46

[1] Whole-time equivalents.
[2] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[3] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Royal Liverpool Hospital

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are currently being treated at the intensive therapy unit of the Royal Liverpool hospital; how many patients have been refused admission to the unit in each week over the past year; and how many staff are currently employed in the unit.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the Liverpool health authority for the information he requires.

National Health Service Beds (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service beds were lost in *(a)* Nottingham district health authority and *(b)* England and Wales in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Data on net changes in average daily available beds between 1978 and 1979, and between 1986 and 1987-88 are given in the table. Information on Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Changes in average daily available beds, Nottingham and England 1978-79, 1986 to 1987-88

	Nottingham	England
1978	4,329	369,235
1979	4,198	361,670
1986	3,794	315,714
[1]1987-88	3,671	296,777

[1] A 15-month period (January 1987 to end March 1988).

Hospital Incinerators

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure that the money made available for the improvement of hospital incinerators will be spent solely for that purpose regardless of any change in the status of hospital incinerators and their currently being subjected to Crown immunity.

Mr. Freeman: It is for health authorities to determine the allocation of the resources available to them by relating local circumstances to the Government's strategic priorities for the National Health Service. The Department will, however, be monitoring health authorities' progress on the upgrading-replacement of incinerators required to meet new controls on emissions to the atmosphere planned to come into force next year. We shall be neither seeking, nor would expect, Crown immunity from these controls for the National Health Service.

Insulin

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) from which pharmaceutical companies the National Health Service purchased (i) animal insulin, and (ii) human insulin; and what was the cost of transaction with each company for each financial year since 1983-84;

(2) what was the cost to the National Health Service of purchasing (i) animal insulin and (ii) human insulin for each of the financial years since 1983-84.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table for the calendar years 1983 and 1987. Information for the intervening years can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Net Ingredient Cost of prescriptions dispensed by retail pharmacy in England (£000)

	1983 Animal	1983 Human	1987 Animal	1987 Human
Boots	125	—	92	—
CP Pharmaceuticals	407	—	3,505	—
Eli Lilly	—	197	—	2,791
Novo	8,925	269	5,984	4,093
Wellcome/Nordisk	5,595	—	3,481	3,601
Evans/generics	3,778	—	828	—
Total	18,831	465	13,889	10,485

Notes:
1. Figures are estimates based on a sample of approximately 1 in 200 prescriptions dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors within the Family Practitioner Service. The figures do not include details of insulin dispensed by the hospital service or of prescriptions dispensed by Dispensing Doctors.
2. The figure for generics relate to prescriptions written by their generic name.

Insulin

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which pharmaceutical companies produce (i) animal insulin, (ii) human insulin, and (iii) both.

Mr. Mellor: The following companies supply insulin in the United Kingdom:

(i) *animal insulin*
CP Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Evans Medical Ltd.
(ii) *human insulin*
Eli Lilly and Co., Ltd.
(iii) *human and animal insulin*
Novo Laboratories Ltd.
Nordisk/Wellcome

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on how many diabetics used (i) animal insulin, and (ii) human insulin for each year since 1983.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect centrally information about patients and their drugs, but the number of prescriptions for animal and human insulin dispensed by community pharmacists in each of 1983 and 1987 is shown in the table. Information for the intervening years can be

provided only at disproportionate cost. Information from the hospital services indicates that in 1987-88 approximately 350,000 units of insulin were supplied of which 75 per cent. were human based.

Number of perscriptions for insulin dispensed by retail pharmacy in England (Thousands)

	Animal	Human
1983	930	19
1987	525	418

Note:
1. Figures are estimates based on a sample of approximately 1 in 200 prescriptions dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors within the Family Practitioner Service. The figures do not include details of insulin dispensed by the hospital service or of prescriptions dispensed by Dispensing Doctors.
2. The figure for generics relate to prescriptions written by their generic name.

Single Market

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effect the removal of barriers and frontiers will have in 1992 on the movement of bodies from one European Economic Community member state to another.

Mr. Mellor: None that I am aware of.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library the report on salmonella food poisoning by Dr. Bernard Rowe, the director of enteric pathogens in the central public health laboratory.

Mr. Freeman: The report referred to is in fact a paper prepared by Dr. Rowe for use by the current working group on salmonella and eggs comprising representatives of the egg industry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the public health laboratory service acting for this Department. The report of the working group is still being prepared.

Disability Survey

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking in relation to the OPCS disability survey commissioned by him.

Mr. Mellor: Primary responsibility for this lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. But the Department of Health will be alert to any findings that relate to health or social services. It will not be possible to draw any firm conclusions, however, until all the reports are available.

Prescriptions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the total expenditure on *(a)* family practitioner services and *(b)* general practitioner prescribed prescriptions in England in cash terms and real terms for each year since 1980, and also expressing both as an index based upon 1980.

Mr. Mellor: Gross expenditure on family practitioner services, and on the pharmaceutical services, including remuneration costs, in England since 1980-81 is given in the tables in cash and in real terms.

Table 1: Gross expenditure on Family Practitioner Services. England

	Cash		Real terms at 1987-88 prices (a)	
	£ million	Index 1980-81 = 100	£ million	Index 1980-81 = 100
1980-81	2,116	100·0	3,136	100·0
1981-82	2,442	115·4	3,295	105·1
1982-83	2,829	133·7	3,563	113·6
1983-84	3,039	143·6	3,661	116·7
1984-85	3,345	158·1	3,835	122·3
1985-86	3,524	166·5	3,834	122·3
1986-87	3,788	179·0	3,988	127·2
1987-88	4,202	198·6	4,202	134·0

Table 2: Gross expenditure on the Pharmaceutical Services. England

	Cash		Real terms at 1987-88 prices (a)	
	£ million	Index 1980-81 = 100	£ million	Index 1980-81 = 100
1980-81	974	100·0	1,443	100·0
1981-82	1,125	115·5	1,518	105·2
1982-83	1,290	132·4	1,625	112·6
1983-84	1,431	146·9	1,723	119·4
1984-85	1,551	159·2	1,778	123·2
1985-86	1,657	170·1	1,803	124·9
1986-87	1,787	183·5	1,881	130·3
1987-88	1,975	202·8	1,975	136·9

(a) adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Special Hospitals

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in special hospitals are currently awaiting transfer to other National Health Service hospitals; and how many of these have been waiting for *(a)* one to two years, *(b)* two to three years, *(c)* three to four years, and *(d)* over four years.

Mr. Freeman: There are 47 patients in the special hospitals who have been recommended for a move to another hospital on trial leave or transfer and who are currently awaiting a vacancy in an identified hospital. Of these, four patients have been waiting for one to two years, and two patients for two to three years; none have been waiting for longer than three years. The length of wait has been calculated:

(i) in the case of patients subject to restrictions under the Mental Health Act, from the date on which the Home Secretary's consent to transfer was obtained, and

(ii) in the case of unrestricted patients, from the date on which a placement was agreed between the special hospital and the receiving hospital.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authorities are making free vaccination available against hepatitis B to their staff; and what percentage of those at risk this covers.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we do not hold this information centrally.

Midwives

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations he initiated or engaged in with the Royal College of Midwives, or any qualified midwife, concerning the content of the management guidance document distributed to general managers of Health

Service units in May; and what specific guidance was contained in this document in respect of the duties and grading of midwives.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The management guidance on implementation of the new clinical grading structure was the subject of extensive consultation with senior nurses and midwives and other managers in the National Health Service. It was managements' guidance to management about the implementation of a grading structure negotiated with the trades unions and I see no sensible reason why such guidance should have been the subject of consultation with staff side organisations. The guidance as a whole relates equally to nursing and midwifery posts because the grading structure as negotiated with the trades unions and endorsed by the independent review body relates equally to both.

Breast Cancer (Screening)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women are likely to be screened for breast cancer in the Pontefract district health authority in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 14 December at column *605*.

Retired People

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department have carried out into the attitudes of retired people towards *(a)* an increase in the number of centres offering them help and advice and *(b)* investment in pioneer surgery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have not commissioned any research that is specifically directed to these topics.

Young Drinkers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the percentage of 17 to 18-year-olds drinking three or more times a week; to what social factors he attributes excessive drinking among young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The most recently available information is contained in two reports on surveys conducted by OPCS. These are "Adolescent Drinking—1984" and "Drinking in England and Wales in 1987". Copies are in the Library.

In the adolescent drinking survey about a third of 17-year-old boys and a quarter of 17-year-old girls reported drinking on three or more days a week. Separate information on drinking by 18-year-olds is not readily available. The causes of excessive drinking among young people are many and varied and, inter-relate in ways which are not fully understood. The ministerial group on alcohol misuse, which co-ordinates Government action in this field, have identified the need for further research into young people's attitudes to alcohol and drinking behaviour; the group is currently taking steps to see how this might best be undertaken.

Cervical Cytology Screening

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of health authorities is failing to comply with Government cervical cytology screening guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We issued guidelines covering many aspects of cervical cancer screening to health authorities in January 1988. All health authorities have now implemented computerised call and recall systems. Approximately 25 per cent. of health authorities are currently not meeting the Government's target of reporting the result of a smear within one month to the doctor who submitted it. Health authorities' performance is monitored and those not meeting this target are asked to explain what remedial action they are taking.

Abortions

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated average cost of a National Health Service abortion broken down into *(a)* revenue cost, and *(b)* total cost, and whether he can estimate average cost by method of operation for the latest available year.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated revenue cost of an abortion in NHS hospitals is £190. We do not have available information on the total cost and average cost by method of operation.

Adoption

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he proposes to lay an order under section 57(8) of the Adoption Act 1976 to enable adoption agencies to continue to operate adoption allowance schemes approved by him beyond 15 February 1989, when the experimental period introduced in 1982 under section 32 of the Children Act 1975 will end.

Mr. Mellor: We have published, in accordance with the requirements of section 57(6) of the Adoption Act 1976, a report of a research project commissioned by the Department from the National Children's Bureau into the operation of adoption allowance schemes in England and Wales. The research findings show that adoption allowance schemes have succeeded in their objective of enabling adoption agencies to find suitable adoptive families for children who could not otherwise enjoy the benefits and security of adoption. We intend, therefore, to lay an order under section 57(8) which, subject to the agreement of both Houses, allows adoption agencies to continue to submit schemes for approval by the Secretary of State and to operate approved schemes.

Research Priorities

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his Department's priorities for research in the fields of health and personal social services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The research programmes directly supported by the Department are designed to contribute to the efficiency of the health and social services by promoting improvements in organisation, operation and management.

Bearing in mind the primary responsibility of the Medical Research Council for biomedical and clinical research, we have concluded that the health and personal social services programme should now concentrate on the following areas:

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS);
professional manpower;
primary health care;
the demands on, and effectiveness of, acute sector services;
the transition to, and maintenance of, community care;
consumer attitudes to the health and personal social services;
the influencing of lifestyles, for example in relation to drug abuse;
child abuse.

The Department will also be contributing to a programme of breast cancer screening research in follow-up to the research recommendations of the Forrest report.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Benefit (Adjudication)

Mr. Lofthouse To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many cases are currently being dealt with by unemployment benefit adjudication officers in Pontefract and Castleford;

(2) how many unemployment benefit adjudication officers are available to the constituency of Pontefract and Castleford;

(3) what is the current waiting time for adjudication officers to adjudicate on cases currently being dealt with by unemployment benefit adjudication officers in Pontefract and Castleford.

Mr. Cope: Information is not available in the precise form requested, as adjudication officers are not attached to individual unemployment benefit offices or constituencies. They work in groups which cover a number of offices.

On 9 December 1988, adjudication officers were currently considering 2,138 cases arising on claims for unemployment benefit in the adjudication office area of York, which includes the constituency of Pontefract and Castleford. The number of adjudication officers serving the York adjudication office is nine.

No figures are held on the waiting time for an adjudication officer's decision, but the speed with which adjudication officers make decisions—the time taken between their receiving a case and reaching a decision after making all the necessary inquiries—is monitored in a 5 per cent. sample of cases.

The sample for the York adjudication office shows that, for the three-month period ending 30 June 1988, a total of 93 per cent. of cases were decided within four weeks of referral to an adjudication officer.

Environment and Safety Information Act

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision has been made to ensure the implementation of the Environment and Safety Information Act.

Mr. Nicholls: Arrangements are being made to ensure that all authorities with enforcement responsibilities under statutes listed in the schedule of the Act will make the required information available to the public by 1 April 1989.

Tourism

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the European Community document 8794/88 (proposal for action programme for European Tourism Year 1990) will be ratified by Her Majesty's Government; and when the proposals contained therein will become effective.

Mr. Lee: At the Tourism Council on 14 December 1988, European Community Ministers agreed the proposal on an action programme for the European Tourism Year in 1990. The Commission in consultation with representatives of member states will take appropriate measures to implement the programme. Preparatory work will begin early in the new year.

Work Permits

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether a decision has yet been made to continue after 1988 the special annual quota of work permits for workers from the dependent territories whose level of skill is below that required by the general work permit scheme.

Mr. Lee: Yes. It has been decided that the quota for 1989 will be 200—the same as this year. Within the figure of 200, no more than 150 permits will be allowed for any one territory.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he is taking professional advice on the feasibility of moving the Skills Training Agency into the private sector, as indicated in chapter 4 of the White Paper, "Employment in the 1990s".

Mr. Fowler: I am appointing Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, a leading accountancy and management consultancy firm, to advise me on the feasibility of such a move. I expect to receive its advice in the new year.

Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many clients passed through the employment rehabilitation centres in 1978, 1979, 1986, 1987 and 1988; and how many staff were employed in the employment rehabilitation centres in those years.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of clients helped*	*Number of staff employed*
1978-79	15,670	824
1979-80	16,000	895
1986-87	14,790	686
1987-88	16,000	671·5
1988-89	[1]26,000	[2]664·5

[1] Estimate.
[2] As at 30 November 1988.

From 1985 the employment rehabilitation service has been delivered through assistance towards employment centres as well as employment rehabilitation centres. The information given includes both types of centre.

Employment Training

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what organisations have been granted employment training agent contracts; what are the planned volumes of trainees in the first six months; and what numbers of trainees have been through at the most recently available date for each Department of employment training agency area;

(2) what are the numbers of approved places allocated under employment training; what are the area budgets for the programme; and what are the allocations of supplementary grant for each Department of Employment Training Agency area for each area.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Information on the types of organisations which have been granted training agency contracts in employment training is given in table 1.

Information on the actual training agent throughput in September and October 1988, the allocation of filled places (allocations are made on the basis of filled places not approved places, which do not exist in ET), total planned expenditure and supplementary grant allocation is given in table 2.

Information on the profiles of training agent volumes is for internal management only.

Table 1

ET: Training agents by organisation type (at 31 October 1988)

Area Office	*EMP*	*VB*	*LA*	*Others*	*Total*
South East Region					
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	2	0	0	2	4
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	1	0	1	2	4
Essex	2	1	0	1	4
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	1	0	3	1	5
Kent	0	1	1	1	3
Surrey	0	0	1	0	1
Sussex	3	0	1	0	4
London Region					
Inner London North	0	0	0	6	6
Inner London South	1	0	1	1	3
London East	0	0	0	3	3
London North	0	1	4	0	5
London South	2	0	0	0	2
London West	0	0	3	1	4
South West Region					
Avon	0	0	1	0	1
Devon and Cornwall	0	0	4	0	4
Dorset and Somerset	0	0	2	0	2
Gloucester and Wiltshire	0	0	2	0	2
West Midlands Region					
Birmingham and Solihull	1	0	2	0	3
Coventry and Warwickshire	2	0	0	0	2
Dudley and Sandwell	2	0	0	0	2
Staffordshire	3	0	0	1	4
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	1	1	0	0	2
Wolverhampton and Walsall	2	0	0	0	2
East Midlands and Eastern Region					
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	1	0	3	0	4
Derbyshire	3	0	0	0	3
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	2	0	0	0	2
Lincolnshire	1	0	0	0	1
Norfolk and Suffolk	3	0	0	0	3
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	0	1
Yorkshire and Humberside Region					
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	0	0	3	0	3
Humberside	3	0	0	0	3
North Yorkshire and Leeds	2	0	1	0	3
Sheffield and Rotherham	1	1	1	0	3
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	3	0	0	0	3
North West Region					
Cheshire	6	0	1	0	7
Cumbria	2	0	0	0	2
Lancashire	1	0	0	0	1
Central Manchester	2	1	1	0	4
Greater Manchester North	2	0	0	0	2
Greater Manchester East	3	0	0	0	3
Merseyside	2	0	2	1	5
Northern Region					
Cleveland	1	0	0	0	1

Area Office	EMP	VB	LA	Others	Total
County Durham	5	0	0	0	5
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	1	0	2	0	3
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	2	0	3	1	6
Wales					
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	1	0	2	0	3
Gwent	1	0	1	0	2
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	1	0	3	0	4
Mid and South Glamorgan	2	0	2	0	4
Scotland					
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	1	0	2	0	3
Central and Fife	1	0	1	0	2
Glasgow City	2	1	0	0	3
Grampian and Tayside	1	0	1	0	2
Highlands and Islands	2	1	2	0	5
Lanarkshire	1	0	0	0	1
Lothian and Borders	2	0	1	0	3
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	2	1	0	0	3

Notes:
EMP—Employers including Groups of Employers and Private Training Organisations.
VB—Voluntary Bodies.
LA—Local Authorities including Local Education Authorities.

Table 2

ET: Area allocations

Area office	Column 1 Filled places allocation (March 1989)	Column 2 Total planned ET expenditure (September 1988 to March 1989) (£ million)	Column 3 Supplementary grant allocation (included in column 2) (£ million)	Column 4 Actual training agent throughput (September 1988 to October 1988)
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	1,833	1·605	0·618	1,007
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	2,553	2·040	0·764	829
Essex	3,595	3·059	1·358	750
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	3,221	2·334	0·721	898
Kent	3,791	2·679	1·098	1,186
Surrey	1,155	0·861	0·449	343
Sussex	3,020	1·963	0·927	940
London Region				
Inner London North	7,316	5·900	2·300	1,804
Inner London South	4,745	4·400	2·000	1,143
London East	2,890	3·400	1·500	1,528
London North	4,141	3·600	1·800	1,589
London South	1,729	1·400	0·700	600
London West	1,467	1·200	0·600	755
South West Region				
Avon	3,873	3·217	1·386	599
Devon and Cornwall	7,090	6·565	2·867	1,357
Dorset and Somerset	2,983	2·524	1·172	896
Gloucester and Wiltshire	2,927	2·591	1·137	903
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	10,797	8·700	4·100	1,925
Coventry and Warwickshire	4,653	3·900	1·600	980
Dudley and Sandwell	4,936	3·900	1·300	1,587
Staffordshire	4,939	4·100	1·800	1,285
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	4,195	3·600	1·500	981
Wolverhampton and Walsall	5,410	4·300	2·000	1,829
East Midlands and Eastern Region				
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	2,055	1·809	0·769	986
Derbyshire	4,401	3·175	1·400	1,446
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	4,408	3·854	1·585	1,106
Lincolnshire	2,032	1·649	0·700	443
Norfolk and Suffolk	4,125	3·630	1·462	1,211
Nottinghamshire	5,453	4·988	1·784	1,511
Yorkshire and Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	6,300	6·018	2·300	1,702
Humberside	5,787	5·281	2·210	1,679

Area office	Column 1 Filled places allocation (March 1989)	Column 2 Total planned ET expenditure (September 1988 to March 1989) (£ million)	Column 3 Supplementary grant allocation (included in column 2) (£ million)	Column 4 Actual training agent throughput (September 1988 to October 1988)
North Yorkshire and Leeds	6,655	5·911	2·777	1,447
Sheffield and Rotherham	8,118	7·340	2·856	2,465
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	6,882	6·103	2·749	2,015
North West Region				
Cheshire	5,048	3·571	1·412	1,635
Cumbria	2,170	1·943	0·879	547
Lancashire	7,179	6·172	2·456	1,987
Central Manchester	9,257	7·035	2·954	1,282
Greater Manchester North	6,480	5·901	2·575	1,094
Greater Manchester East	3,901	3·467	1·350	1,388
Merseyside	16,551	15·853	7·086	2,016
Northern Region				
Cleveland	9,583	8·647	3·614	1,220
County Durham	7,120	6·744	3·028	1,708
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	7,511	7·080	3·133	1,771
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	9,856	8·937	3·835	2,845
Wales				
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	6,329	5·514	2·618	1,283
Gwent	3,902	3·775	1·834	616
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	5,426	4·899	2·455	767
Mid and South Glamorgan	8,202	6·737	3·505	1,761
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway	4,664	4·568	1·802	1,256
Central and Fife	4,856	4·285	1·965	1,007
Glasgow City	9,854	8·455	3·586	1,786
Grampian and Tayside	4,397	3·519	1·583	1,754
Highlands and Islands	1,700	1·291	0·542	365
Lanarkshire	4,730	3·964	1·790	950
Lothian and Borders	5,258	4·563	1·912	1,370
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	6,014	4·921	2·256	736

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria have been used by the Department of Employment Training Agency area offices to assess bids for approved training agents and approved training managers' contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Contracts for training agents and training managers were negotiated on the basis of written proposals submitted to Training Agency area offices. The Training Agency considered the quality of the training offered; the ways in which the proposed training related to the needs of the local labour market; the previous experience and financial viability of the organisations concerned; and the cost-effective use of the available resources. Contracts were awarded on the basis that every organisation would have to meet the criteria for approved status by March 1990. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the right criteria were used.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the profiles of the number of expected starts, excluding conversion from other programmes, on employment training for the months of September, October and November for each Department of Employment Training Agency area.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Profiles of starts with training managers are for internal management purposes only.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many bids had been *(a)* received for ATA and ATM contracts, *(b)* accepted and *(c)* refused for each Department of Employment Training Agency area, at the most recent available date.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The information requested is given in the following table:

Bids for training agent and training manager contracts (up to and including 31 October 1988)

Area office	Training agent		Training manager	
	Number of bids received	Number of bids accepted	Number of bids received	Number of bids accepted
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	11	4	20	9
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	10	4	29	12
Essex	10	4	40	15
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	15	5	36	11
Kent	7	3	32	10
Surrey	4	1	24	7
Sussex	12	4	32	12
London Region				
Inner London North	20	6	65	38
Inner London South	6	3	28	21
London East	7	3	35	17
London North	11	5	22	13
London South	6	2	27	12

Area office	Training agent: Number of bids received	Training agent: Number of bids accepted	Training manager: Number of bids received	Training manager: Number of bids accepted
London West	9	4	33	9
South West Region				
Avon	6	1	45	25
Devon and Cornwall	7	3	53	21
Dorset and Somerset	5	2	60	13
Gloucester and Wiltshire	2	2	32	11
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	20	3	72	13
Coventry and Warwickshire	11	2	58	9
Dudley and Sandwell	9	2	48	19
Staffordshire	9	4	47	17
The Marches, Hereford and Worcester	16	2	71	14
Wolverhampton and Walsall	5	2	39	18
East Midlands and Eastern Region				
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	15	4	31	13
Derbyshire	10	3	43	22
Leicestershire and Northampton-shire	12	2	50	21
Lincolnshire	6	1	25	10
Norfolk and Suffolk	10	3	26	15
Nottinghamshire	6	1	56	23
Yorkshire and Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	8	3	50	18
Humberside	5	3	56	38
North Yorkshire and Leeds	13	3	62	29
Sheffield and Rotherham	8	3	61	24
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	14	3	60	24
North West Region				
Cheshire	13	7	49	25
Cumbria	7	2	26	11
Lancashire	2	1	51	33
Central Manchester	12	4	62	36
Greater Manchester North	7	3	47	21
Greater Manchester East	14	3	38	16
Merseyside	13	5	92	54
Northern Region				
Cleveland	9	1	64	43
County Durham	8	5	45	26
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	12	3	61	40
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	6	6	56	42
Wales				
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	14	3	67	45
Gwent	5	2	48	25
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	9	4	91	24
Mid and South Glamorgan	12	4	76	40
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	9	3	36	17
Central and Fife	9	2	48	19
Glasgow City	7	3	64	40
Grampian and Tayside	7	2	35	27
Highlands and Islands	11	5	27	17
Lanarkshire	5	1	40	29
Lothian and Borders	8	3	38	26
Refrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	13	3	33	18

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 15 December at column 1080. This subject is kept under review but my Department has no responsibilities at present requiring the issue of identity cards.

Egg Inspectors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present establishment of egg inspectors among *(a)* Ministry of Agriculture veterinarians, *(b)* Health and Safety Executive agriculture inspectors, *(c)* the general egg marketing inspectorate (Ministry of Agriculture), *(d)* environmental health officers and *(e)* trading standards officers; by what percentage each of these inspectorates are below establishment; what is the average frequency of inspections carried out by each individual inspectorate; and if he will make a statement as to the function of each inspectorate.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The only one of these groups with an establishment of egg inspectors is the Ministry's egg marketing inspectorate. This comprises 32 inspectors. It is currently 3 per cent. (one inspector) below complement. The average frequency of inspections is two and a half per day per inspector.

The function of the inspectorate is to enforce the EC's regulations on egg marketing and hatching eggs at all marketing stages up to but excluding retail level. It is also required to undertake visits to retailers at the request of trading standards officers who have responsibility for enforcing these regulations at retail level.

Deer (Tuberculosis)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why his Department's tests on deer imported from Hungary failed to spot the presence of tuberculosis; and what steps he is taking to improve the animal health evaluation techniques of his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Some deer imported into this country in 1985 under Hungarian certification were subsequently found to be infected with tuberculosis and all were traced. Our import requirements at that time included pre-export testing by the country of origin and quarantine but not testing on arrival. Following the 1985 incident, the import controls were strengthened to require more stringent pre-export isolation and testing and post-import tuberculosis testing. No case of tuberculosis has been detected in deer which have been imported since January 1986.

The only validated test currently available for the diagnosis of tuberculosis in deer is the tuberculin test. It is recognised that this test is not as sensitive in deer as in cattle and, in consequence; its interpretation has been amended. When used at suitable intervals and interpreted in accordance with the revised guidelines, it remains the best method of detecting the disease in deer.

Research into an Elisa test has been carried out at the central veterinary laboratory while the Morodum research institute is looking at a lymphocyte transformation test, but it is too early to say if either could be used in the field.

ITB Pension Fund

Mr. Stern: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to allow pensioners of the ITB pension fund's closed fund to have their pensions paid into a building society account.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In conjunction with the Department of Employment, approval for such an amendment to the rules of the ITB pension funds's closed fund has recently been given. The pension fund's trustees were advised of this on 6 December 1988.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research known to his Department which is relevant to food poisoning and has been *(a)* ongoing and *(b)* commissioned in each of the last five years; and if he will state the source of funding in each case.

Mr. Ryder: The following list of research projects covers most of the publicly funded research relevant to microbial food poisoning ongoing and newly commissioned over the past two years. A fuller reply could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what funding has been provided by his Department for the salmonella research being carried out by Dr. Geoffrey Mead at the Institute of Food Research in Bristol; what were the objectives of the research; what information has been obtained from it; when the funding is to cease; if a request has been made for it to continue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Bob Cryer) on 8 December.

SCOTLAND

Tourism

15. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the administrative costs of promoting Scottish tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that STB's administration costs will amount to £957,000 in the current financial year. Expenditure on administration is 14 per cent. of the board's grant-in-aid provision of £6·8 million.

Rating Reform

16. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards the implementation of the community charge in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Arrangements for the introduction of the community charge in April next year are proceeding well. All the necessary regulations are now in place or will shortly be in place. Registration officers and levying authorities are making good progress in discharging their responsibilities.

19. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the proposed combined region and district contribution which community charge payers living in Caithness district and in Sutherland district will be expected to make to the revenue support grant safety net.

Mr. Lang: Without the safety net, revenue support grant per adult would be £12 or 1·5 per cent. higher for Caithness and £45 or 5·5 per cent. higher for Sutherland. Even allowing for this, grant for next year, taking into account also the grant for Highland region, is being increased by £74 or 10·5 per cent. per adult in Caithness and by £95 or 13·3 per cent. per adult in Sutherland.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the number of second homes liable for the standard community charge.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that as at 30 June 1986 there were 19,446 second homes in Scotland. This figure is derived from information supplied by local authorities.

43. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from the Scottish Trades Union Congress regarding the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no recent representations from the Scottish Trades Union Congress on the community charge.

57. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what he estimates will be the average level of community charge in Scotland in 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas).

60. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the annual cost of collection of the poll tax in Scotland; and what is the current equivalent cost of collection of rates.

Mr. Lang: The estimated cost of administering the community charge and non-domestic rating in 1989-90 is £44 million. The cost of administering the rating system in the current year is estimated at £26 million.

65. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards the implementation of the community charge in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Arrangements for the introduction of the community charge in April next year are proceeding well. All the necessary regulations are now in place or will shortly be in place. Registration officers and levying authorities are making good progress in discharging their responsibilities.

Tenants (Transfers)

17. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that each Scottish Special Housing Association tenant in Lothians and throughout Scotland will have the final say over the transfer of their house to any private landlord; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 will give individual tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Associations the right of choosing to transfer to a new private landlord. As far as voluntary disposals by public sector landlords are concerned, my right hon. and learned Friend will withhold his consent to any proposed voluntary disposal if a majority of tenants is opposed.

NHS Patients

20. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards providing an internal and external market for National Health Service patients in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is currently considering a wide range of possible developments with a view to providing a better service for National Health Service patients in Scotland.

District Councils

22. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what future changes in functions he proposes for district councils.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to change the range of functions for which district councils are responsible.

"Keep Warm this Winter"

23. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many calls have been made to freefone 0800 838587 following the publication by the Scottish Health Education Group's leaflet, "Keep Warm this Winter".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Between 17 November, when the "Keep Warm this Winter" campaign was launched, and 11 December there have been 283 calls.

Manufacturing Exports

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of Scottish manufacturing exports achieved in 1987.

Mr. Lang: The preliminary results of the survey of Scottish manufactured exports for 1987, conducted by the Scottish Council (development & industry), indicate that exports of Scottish manufactured goods increased by 13 per cent. in value. Scottish manufactured exports per employee were 16 per cent. higher than the comparable United Kingdom figure and exceeded the levels attained by West Germany and Japan.

Local Government Act 1988

25. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had any recent discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the current progress of implementing the Local Government Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions recently. General guidance to local authorities on the provisions of the Act and its implementation was contained in departmental circulars issued on 6 April, 20 May and 23 August 1988.

Labour Statistics

26. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current rate of unemployment in Scotland; what was the level in August 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland currently stands at 10·8 per cent. of the work force compared with 12·6 per cent. in August 1984. Since January 1987 seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland has fallen by nearly 74,000 and is now at its lowest level for seven years.

32. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of unemployment in Scotland; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Lang: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland in November 1988 was 266,900; the corresponding figure for November 1979 was 140,600.

Bus Companies (Takeover)

27. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what protection he intends to give to the future Scottish Bus company against takeovers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid).

Scottish Homes

28. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards the establishment of Scottish Homes on 1 April 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingham) on 9 November at column *293*.

The Scottish Homes Board held its first formal meeting on 5 December when a number of decisions were taken on matters relating to the staffing and organisation of Scottish Homes. A number of appointments to senior posts within Scottish Homes have now been made and other posts have been advertised. An order has been made under section 3(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1989 confirming that the responsibilities and obligations of the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in respect of its Scottish functions will be transferred to Scottish Homes with effect from 1 April 1989. I have determined that all staff of the SSHA and the Housing Corporation in respect of the Scottish functions should receive offers of employment in accordance with the terms of schedule 1 to the 1988 Act by 31 December 1988. The relevant offers of employment were in fact issued by Scottish Homes on 16 December.

Single Market

29. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the level of business awareness there is in Scotland of the opportunities presented by 1992 and the completion of the single market in Europe.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) today.

Newbattle Abbey College

31. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had any recent discussions with the governors about the future of Newbattle Abbey college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been no meetings since my officials met representatives from the board on 25 January.

In July, following an acknowledgement by the board that radical changes in the college's provision were necessary, my right hon. and learned Friend made clear the basis on which he was prepared to consider continued funding of the college after the end of the present academic year. In particular he would require, by the end of this year, evidence of firm and specific undertakings by education authorities and higher education institutions to make extensive use of Newbattle in support of their wider access activities. No response has yet been received from the governors.

East Coast Railway Line (Electrification)

33. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has discussed with British Rail the electrification of the east coast line between Aberdeen and Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland met the chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid on 15 November 1988 and discussed a wide range of issues. Responsibility for investment is a matter for the British Railways Board, not the Government. However, I understand that the board's view is that the level of traffic would not justify electrifying the line north of Edinburgh.

Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin (Road)

34. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to meet representatives of the Highland regional council to discuss the prospects for the building of a road between Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin, Isle of Skye; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to meet Highland regional council for this purpose but officials of the Scottish Development Department have met officials of the Highland regional council to discuss the feasibility study prepared by the regional council.

Electricity Bill

35. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the effect of the Electricity Bill on Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Since the publication of the Electricity Bill on 1 December my right hon. and learned Friend has received four written representations. In addition, I have met representatives of the Scottish Electricity trade unions committee when a range of matters relating to the Electricity Bill was discussed.

"No Turning Back"

36. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy towards the issues raised in the recent publication, "No Turning Back," on Scottish separation, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Rifkind: The concept of Scottish independence in Europe as proposed in this pamphlet written by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) is no more than a useful slogan adopted by the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues as a device to avoid their party appearing to have a separatist identity. I also note the hon. Gentleman's advocacy in that pamphlet of a power of direct taxation for the European Parliament.

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

37. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope next to meet representatives of COSLA on Friday 28 April 1989, to start consultations on the revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91.

Damp Housing

38. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to eradicate dampness in council and Scottish Special Housing Association property.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for eradicating dampness in local authority houses rests with the local authorities themselves. It is up to them to decide how much of the resources available to them should be used for this purpose. To assist this the Secretary of State has made increasing capital allocations available for work

on authorities' own stock. In recent years these have included special allocations for tackling condensation and dampness, rising to £27 million in the current year, though authorities have been free to spend more on this if they wish. For 1989-90 we are increasing overall allocations by £45 million (as well as subsuming the special allocations into the general allocations). This means that authorities will continue to be well placed to carry out work to which they attach priority.

In recent years as par of a general programme of improvement of its existing stock, the Scottish Special Housing Association has maintained successive annual programmes of central heating installation and the provision of improved thermal insulation. In the current year the association will spend £3·6 million on work of this type involving 3,550 houses. In its programme of comprehensive modernisation of non-traditional houses, now nearing completion, similar improvements have been undertaken in almost 14,000 houses to date.

Health Boards (Appointments)

39. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet each health board prior to any new appointments to that board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

46. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce new appointments to health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to announce the names of new members of health boards early in the new year.

Health Boards (Tendering)

40. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what savings have been made to health boards in Scotland as a result of competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The contracts awarded so far will release savings of more than £15 million in the following three years for reinvestment in direct patient care.

61. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what savings have been made to health boards in Scotland as a result of competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

Electricity Industry Privatisation

41. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the volume of electricity likely to be sold by the Scottish electricity industry to England following privatisation.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

Constitutional Convention

42. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received seeking a Scottish constitutional convention.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on 9 November at column *228*. Both letters received advocated a Scottish constitutional convention.

Dog Pollution Schemes

44. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will issue model byelaws for the use of local authorities who wish to set up dog pollution schemes to protect children, similar to those operating in England and Wales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend plans to consult on this and other issues arising from a review of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 early next year. In doing so he will seek views on alternatives, including byelaws, to the way in which the present provisions of the Act address the problem.

Manufacturing Exports

45. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of Scottish manufacturing exports achieved in 1987.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) today.

Bus Industry (Buyouts)

47. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has plans to give financial assistance to management/employee buyouts within the bus transport industry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Management-employee teams wanting to bid for their companies will be given financial help towards the costs of advice and consultancy needed to mount bids, on the terms recently announced by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Constitutional Reform

48. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to introduce a devolved assembly or parliament for Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government believe that the present constitutional arrangements provide for Scotland's interests to be fully respected and recognised. The Government therefore have no plans to introduce a devolved assembly or parliament for Scotland.

Nurses (Regrading)

49. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the regrading of nurses in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received various representations from nurses, members of the public and hon. Members. Correspondents have been advised that in accepting the pay review body's recommendations the Government have awarded nurses their biggest ever pay increase while introducing a grading structure which will improve both career prospects and ward management.

Those nurses who are unhappy with their new grades have been recommended to lodge appeals with their health boards as soon as possible.

Channel Tunnel

50. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies have been carried out by his Department into whether the siting of a Channel tunnel passenger terminal to the north of central London would assist in bringing greater prosperity to Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has had meetings with the chairman of the British Rail Board on how to ensure that Scotland benefits fully from the Channel tunnel. The Scottish Development Agency has commissioned a report from consultants to consider the likely impact of the Channel tunnel on Scotland and ways in which the potential benefits can be maximised. British Rail intends to run through trains from Scotland and the north of England to the continent via the tunnel. I am in no doubt that the efficient and speedy operation of these services will be of major importance for the prosperity of Scotland.

Scottish TUC

51. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Scottish Trade Unions Congress; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Lang: I have agreed to meet the General Council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 27 January 1989 to discuss matters affecting the Scottish economy.

Education Reform

52. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other interested parties concerning the proposed legislation for opting out of Scottish local authority schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie).

Post Offices

53. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on the proposed downgrading of main post offices in Scotland to self-employed, franchised counter services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received one representation, from Lairg community council, against the downgrading of Lairg post office to sub-post office status. The day-to-day management of the Post Office business is the responsibility of the Post Office Board. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is, however, responsible for general policy. I understand the proposals to regrade a number of Crown post offices to sub-post offices were made on the grounds of commercial and service considerations.

Drug Abuse (Govan)

54. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding and other assistance his Department will provide to community groups formed in Glasgow, Govan constituency for the purpose of mobilising the community to combat drug abuse.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have taken a wide range of positive measures to encourage and assist local action to combat the problem of drug misuse. The primary responsibility for planning and developing services to prevent drug misuse and provide help for drug misusers and their families rests with health boards and local authorities, but applications for central funding under schemes such as the urban programme will certainly be considered.

Electricity Boards

55. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish electricity boards; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of the Scottish electricity boards on 4 July when the structural arrangements for the privatised industry in Scotland were discussed.

Power Stations (Coal Burn)

56. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board to discuss the coal burn of Scottish power stations.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board from time to time to discuss a wide range of matters affecting the electricity supply industry.

Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Employment)

58. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for coping with the employment implications of the proposed job losses in Renfrew, West and Inverclyde constituency arising from the announced rundown of 1,150 jobs from Bishopton Royal Ordnance factory and the proposed transfer of CalMac head office from Greenock to Oban.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member will be aware from my answer to his earlier question on 9 November that my right hon. and learned Friend and I have been in touch with, respectively, the chairmen of British Aerospace and of Royal Ordnance. The chairman of Royal Ordnance has informed me that there will be no redundancies before October 1989. This should allow time for the company and other interested organisations, like the Scottish Development Agency, to develop their plans to relieve the effects of these redundancies as far as possible. The Scottish Development Agency has already begun discussions. My right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting the chairman of British Aerospace in January to discuss the company's interests in Scotland generally, including Royal Ordnance Bishopton.

There is a case for moving the headquarters of Caledonian MacBrayne nearer to its centre of operations.

This will require careful consideration and no final decision has been made. My right hon. and learned Friend will expect the new board of Caledonian MacBrayne to appraise fully and report upon the arguments for this move.

Education Bill

59. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what assessment of likely level of demand he based his decision to introduce the forthcoming Education Bill for Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proposed Education Bill will deal with a range of matters of varying importance and general concern. There is evidence of significant interest among parents in the concept of self-governing schools outwith local authority control.

Bus Companies (Takeover)

62. **Mr. Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which regional bus groups he has met to discuss the privatisation proposals for the Scottish Transport Group contained in the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met representatives of any bus companies for this purpose. I recently visited the Falkirk depot of Midland Scottish Omnibuses Ltd to hear the views of the management and employees of the typical company on the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group.

Council House Rents

63. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give his calculations of rent increases for council house tenants in Glasgow in the next year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for Glasgow district council to determine the rent increases which will apply to its housing stock. The draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1989 provides that the council will receive grant of £27·9 million to help with its council housing costs in 1989-90. In addition, the Housing Revenue Accounts General Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order 1988 will enable the council to estimate for a contribution of up to £2·2 million to be carried from its general fund to its housing revenue account in 1989-90. Together, these subsidies to council housing amount to £30·1 million, or 47 per cent. of the total council housing subsidies expected to be made for 1989-90 in Scotland as a whole.

The proposed level of subsidies for Glasgow district council was intended to restrict the rent increases for 1989-90 to an average of £2·00 per dwelling per week. I estimate that, on the basis of reasonable assumptions about income and expenditure and excluding certain loan charges expenditure arising from covenant agreements, rents in Glasgow need not increase by more than this amount. The council entered into its covenant commitments in the knowledge that their cost would be disregarded for the purposes of subsidy calculations.

Tayside Health Board

64. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what savings have been made by Tayside health board as a result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Annual recurrent savings of nearly £148,000 have been achieved by the contracts awarded so far.

Electricity Boards (Capital Debt)

66. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has concerning the capital debt of the Scottish electricity boards.

Mr. Lang: The boards' capital structures will require to be revised prior to privatisation to create an appropriate ratio of debt to equity. The aim will be to choose a capital structure which maximises the returns to the taxpayer and also creates two financially robust companies.

Business Rating Practices

67. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress being made to harmonise business rating practices between Scotland and England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: We are making good progress towards implementing our declared objective of harmonising business rates between Scotland and England and Wales. The problem is not new, but we are the first Government to have taken action to tackle it. Our objective is one which can only be achieved by stages, but a number of steps have already been taken that will bring us closer to harmony within the next two years. Further steps are under detailed consideration to carry that work further, and we have always made it clear that some of the mechanics of the later steps towards harmonisation will have to await the outcome of earlier ones. Our purpose, to achieve at the earliest opportunity fairness for Scottish businesses and better protection from the depredations of high-spending local councils, has never wavered.

Scottish Development Agency

68. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency about the level of employment in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the chairman and board of the Scottish Development Agency on 16 May to discuss strategic issues which might be reflected in the agency's planning and budgeting process. Among other subjects, we discussed ways in which the agency might help to improve employment levels in particular areas of Scotland.

Scottish NFU

69. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Scottish National Farmers Union; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Both my right hon. and learned Friend and my noble Friend the Minister of State meet representatives of the Scottish National Farmers Union regularly. My noble Friend met the Union's general purposes committee last week for a very wide-ranging discussion of current issues.

Employment Training Scheme

70. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authorities have agreed to participate in the Government's employment training scheme.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) earlier today.

Scottish Bus Group

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the consequences of privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group for consumers in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One of the objectives of privatisation is to increase competition and encourage companies to be more responsive to their customers. Locally based companies should be better placed to meet local needs and management will be freer to respond to local demands on the basis of local knowledge.

Donor Cards

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of people whose organs are likely to be suitable for donation for transplant who are currently carrying donor cards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to estimate how many people carry donor cards. The number of donor cards issued in Scotland since the inception of the scheme considerably exceeds the country's total population. It is the Government's policy to ensure that the cards are distributed as widely as possible, through central initiatives and local efforts.

Transplant Surgery

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the availability of hearts, livers, pancreases, kidneys, lungs and eyes for transplant surgery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Only kidney and corneal transplants are carried out in Scotland, although of course all organs donated can be used anywhere in the United Kingdom, wherever the most suitable tissue match can be found. The number of multiple organ donations in the United Kingdom has risen this year, enabling the heart, lung and liver transplant programmes to advance. It is a matter for serious concern, however, that the number of kidney and corneal transplants in Scotland has decreased over the last few years because suitable organs have not been available. It is important that the public in appreciating the benefit which transplant surgery can offer are aware of the need for organs. Such understanding and awareness are of great assistance to the medical profession in their approach to relatives of potential donors about donation.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of people who have died in hospital whose organs would have been suitable for transplant but where no donation was made during the last five years; and if he will list the principal reasons for such action not being taken.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form sought is not available.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients are waiting for transplant operations of *(a)* heart, *(b)* liver, *(c)* pancreas, *(d)* kidney, *(e)* lung and *(f)* cornea, respectively; and what is the maximum and minimum waiting time for such operations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available. The main constraint in undertaking such operations is the availability of suitable organs.

Elder Cottage Hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Greater Glasgow health board about the disposal of Elder cottage hospital; what guarantees were given on its transfer to the National Health Service on its maintenance for a medical purpose; and what proposals he has for its future.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. There is no legal requirement that the hospital, which has been empty since March 1988, be retained for a medical purpose. The Greater Glasgow health board has recently completed consultation about its proposals for the permanent closure of the hospital, which would require the consent of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Special Housing Association

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what bids he has referred to the Scottish Special Housing Association for the purchase of Scottish Special Housing Association houses in Central Scotland; for which properties; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Only one bid for the purchase of Scottish Special Housing Association houses in central Scotland, has been referred by the Scottish Office to the SSHA. The bid by a group of Scottish Special Housing Association managers was for 25,000 houses in the association's south region and Fife. Having considered the inquiry, the association has announced that it would not agree, in principle, to make a voluntary disposal of stock on the basis proposed.

Hospital Medical Staff

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that health boards implement circular 1988 (GEN) 38 on hospital medical staffing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Specific mechanisms will be introduced to ensure the implementation by health boards of the Government's medical manpower policies. These will include the establishment of health board plan for action groups, specifically charged with the task of advising boards on the complex issues arising from the movement towards achieving a balance in hospital medical staffing; the setting of targets on a continuous three year rolling programme for career registrar posts; and by annual monitoring of the number of doctors at all grades in the hospital service. A reconstituted advisory committee on medical establishments, with a wider membership drawn from major specialty groups and including a health board general manager will advise the Scottish Home and Health Department on the implementation of policy objectives.

Water Pollution

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce in Scotland environmental quality standards in water for certain substances commonly used as moth-proofing agents.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. We expect in the near future to extend environmental quality standards for water in Scotland to cover substances commonly used as moth-proofing agents.

Criminal Convictions (Alcohol)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of criminal convictions of people under 18 years of age where alcohol was directly or indirectly related to the offence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Four hundred and sixty-one people under the age of 18 had a charge proved against them for drink related offences in 1987. In the official statistics, such offences comprise drunkenness (including the offences of being drunk and incapable, disorderly behaviour on licensed premises and certain others) which accounted for 183 of the cases, drunk driving (133) and offences under the liquor licensing laws (144). No information is available on the number of offences in which alcohol was indirectly related to the offence.

Emigration

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* for each of the years since 1961 *(a)* the number of persons who have emigrated from Scotland, including those who have emigrated to England, *(b)* the natural increase in population and *(c)* *(a)* as a fraction of *(b)*.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available does not provide accurate estimates of total emigration from Scotland. The table below presents estimates of net emigration from Scotland (including net emigration to other parts of the United Kingdom). Also shown are data on the natural increase in the population. The figures cover the period 1 July to 30 June in each case. The comparison requested at *(c)* is not presented, as ratios based on the two series is meaningless.

	Net emigration from Scotland	*Natural increase in the population*
1961-62	29,900	39,100
1962-63	33,900	38,200
1963-64	39,100	42,300
1964-65	39,100	40,600
1965-66	43,200	33,200
1966-67	43,100	38,100
1967-68	32,000	31,900
1968-69	23,900	30,300
1969-70	20,100	23,300
1970-71	21,700	26,100
1971-72	28,600	18,800
1972-73	11,700	12,400
1973-74	3,000	6,800
1974-75	20,000	4,600
1975-76	5,800	2,700
1976-77	10,800	−1,100
1977-78	17,300	−1,000
1978-79	14,600	1,800
1979-80	16,300	4,300
1980-81	23,100	6,600
1981-82	14,900	1,500
1982-83	17,800	1,800
1983-84	9,100	1,400
1984-85	12,600	3,700
1985-86	16,100	1,600
1986-87	15,000	4,700

Police (Manning Levels)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the current manning levels of police forces in each regional authority area; and what are the recommended manning levels.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The establishments authorised by my right hon. and learned Friend are shown below together with actual strengths as at 30 September 1988.

Force	*Authorised Establishment*		*Actual Strength*	
	Police[1]	*Civilians*[2]	*Police*[1]	*Civilians*[2]
Central	589	123	590	116
Dumfries and Galloway	344	94	348	83
Fife	754	182	759	178
Grampian	1,069	326	1,019	311
Lothian and Borders	2,435	851	2,390	789
Northern	620	183	608	167
Strathclyde	6,954	1,722	6,780	1,544
Tayside	1,001	263	989	247
Totals	13,766	3,744	13,483	3,435

[1] These figures include officers employed at ports, airports and oil related industries where the cost is not borne entirely by the local authority.
[2] Excludes police cadets and part-time staff.

Police (Recruitment)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what requests he has received in the past year from chief constables or regional councils for additional recruitment to local police forces; and what has been his response in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamiliton: During the past 12 months the following forces have requested establishment increases:

Force	*Increase Requested*	
	Police	*Civilians*
Central	22	1
Fife	—	3
Grampian	61	14

Force	Increase Requested: Police	Civilians
Lothian and Borders	46	17
Tayside	—	12

After careful consideration and taking account of advice from Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary all these increases in establishment were authorised by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Trunk Routes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the findings of his road study of the main trunk routes south of Edinburgh, and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 5 December at column 48 to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

Mouthbridge Inquiry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish his conclusions on the Mouthbridge inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department has today written to Borders regional council about the matter and I am arranging for the hon. Member to receive a copy of the letter.

Arctic Tern

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures are available in Scotland to safeguard the feeding grounds of the Arctic tern; and what progress has been made in implementing them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local fishermen have imposed voluntary restrictions on catches of very young sand eels, on which Arctic terns feed extensively, and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is monitoring the effectiveness of these measures to determine whether further management measures may be required. DAFS scientists are also participating in, and helping to co-ordinate, a co-operative programme of research designed to establish the reasons for the reduced availability of sand eels for food.

A94

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the junction on the A94 at Stracathro hospital to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Allowing for the time needed to complete the detailed design work, tendering and contract procedures and the construction itself, I anticipate that the new junction will be in use by the end of 1990.

Grampian Health Board (Grading)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Grampian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table.

Previous grade	Staff in post (whole time equivalent)	Percentages transferred to each new clinical grade: A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	1,566·04	96·7	3·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	30·15	8·6	91·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	1,013·00	—	—	58·8	39·5	1·7	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Training	33·45	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse	27·85	—	—	—	92·8	7·2	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	962·40	—	—	—	47·3	50·0	2·7	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	153·42	—	—	—	—	64·4	35·6	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	137·00	—	—	—	—	99·3	0·7	—	—	—
Sister II	479·23	—	—	—	—	—	32·4	66·3	1·3	—
Sister II Midwife	83·38	—	—	—	—	—	27·4	69·0	3·6	—
District Nurse Sister II	137·53	—	—	—	—	—	2·7	95·5	1·8	—
Sister I	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Sister I Midwife	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Health Visitor	145·69	—	—	—	—	—	—	94·8	5·2	—
Senior Nurse 8	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	88·9	11·1
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	54·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9·3	90·7
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Teacher	32·78	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Fieldwork Teacher	27·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Practical Work Teacher	24·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Tutor	26·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Tutor Midwife	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	85·00	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	131·00	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Previous grade	Staff in post (whole time equivalent)	Percentages transferred to each new clinical grade A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Others	31·00	—	—	—	41·9	19·4	19·4	12·8	6·5	—
TOTALS	5,197·02	29·2	1·5	13·1	20·4	14·3	6·7	12·5	2·3	1·5

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, by region, the take-up to date in the less favoured areas of the £30 grant available under the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The scheme opened on 1 October 1988 and those applications received in Scotland are currently being considered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Forestry Commission. The potential uptake, if these applications are approved, of planting on permanent pasture and rough grazings in the less-favoured areas (which will qualify for payments of £30 per hectare per annum) is as follows:

DAFS Area Office

Areas	Hectares
Highland	48·5
Borders	23·3
Grampian and North East	34·3
Perth and Kinross	8·2
Southern	34·3

Less Favoured Areas

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures are being taken to increase the current rate of payment available for less favoured areas under section 2(3) of the Farm Land and Rural Development Act 1988 in order actively to encourage take-up prior to 30 September 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As the farm woodland scheme was introduced only on 1 October 1988 it would be premature to review the rates of grant.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions the Government have reached following the consultation on the proposals to modernise the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are grateful to all those who commented on the proposals set out in consultation paper of 4 August 1988. The paper attracted over 100 responses, as a result of which we intend to make a number of changes to the original proposals. I shall outline these briefly.

Class 1 Retailing Financial and Professional Services

Our proposals for this class have been proved to be the most controversial in the consultation paper. Although there was some support for the creation of a use class embracing shops and offices selling services directly to the public we have concluded, in view of the opposition to the proposal, not to proceed with the new combined class. We propose instead the creation of 2 classes which would separate shops from financial and professional services and retain the requirement to obtain planning permission for a change of use from shop to office.

Class 2 Food and Drink

Our original proposals involved the creation of a use class embracing hot food shops, cafes, snack-bars and licensed premises. In their comments, however, a number of respondents expressed concern that licensed premises, particularly public houses, generate more severe environmental problems than cafes and snack bars and that this would lead to a significant reduction in residential amenity, particularly in areas of tenement housing. Moreover as a result of the neighbour notification procedures which we introduced the public are now more aware of planning applications for public houses than they would be in the case of applications for licences which are not as widely publicised in the locality. We have considered these comments carefully and have concluded that, in order to meet the concerns of the public on these points, we should exclude premises with a public house license from this use class.

Class 13. Dwellinghouses

Many who commented welcomed the idea of this class, but although we stressed in the consultation paper that the purpose of this class was to clarify the circumstances in which multiple occupancy constitutes development requiring planning permission and was not intended to deal with the social and other issues raised by multiple occupancy, much of the comment has none the less focused on these issues. In response therefore to the concern voiced about the possible weakening of controls over multiple occupancy as a result of the new use class, we intend to amend our proposals so that the class excludes flats and the threshold at which, in planning terms, a change of use from a dwellinghouse to multiple occupancy occurs, is reduced from six persons living together to five.

The Scottish Development Department is currently considering the outcome of a wide ranging consultation exercise on multiple occupancy. These changes to the planning use classes are not intended to pre-empt any action which may be taken as a result of that consultation exercise. If necessary we shall be ready to adjust the provisions of the use classes order to be consistent with other controls over multiple occupancy.

Other proposals in the consultation paper, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House, remain largely unchanged. The Scottish Development Department will issue guidance which will explain the operation of the order in more detail when it is brought into force.

Since, under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972, the revised use classes order does not require to be laid before Parliament for approval, my right hon. and learned Friend will now proceed to make the order comprising the revised use classes. An amendment to the Town and Country Planning (General

Development) (Scotland) Order 1981 will also be required to implement certain of our proposals which my right hon. and learned Friend will lay before the House. It is our intention that the revised use classes order and associated general development order amendments will come into force early in 1989.

Adoption Allowance Schemes

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the future of adoption allowance schemes approved under section 32 of the Children Act 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has published today a summary report on the outcome of a research project designed to assess the effectiveness of the adoption allowance schemes in Scotland. The favourable outcome of that research has led him to the view that schemes, operated on an experimental basis since 1982, should become a continuing feature of adoption legislation. In accordance with the statutory requirement, he will shortly lay an order before Parliament, seeking the approval to provide a permanent statutory base for the schemes by repealing the original temporary provisions.

Shipping Subsidies

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for shipping subsidies for sea transport services to Scotland in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to parliamentary approval of the estimates, I propose to make available in 1989-90 total subsidy provision of £12·10 million. The deficit subsidy for Caledonian MacBrayne will reduce in line with recent trends in the company's improved performance to £6·28 million. The estimated requirement to continue the fare reduction support for P and O services to Orkney and Shetland is increased to £4·32 million. On the basis of budgets submitted by coastal shippers within the tarriff rebate subsidy scheme, the funding requirement next year will be £1·5 million.

The proposed level of subsidy reflects the Government's continuing commitment to assisting the essential sea transport services to the west coast islands and the Northern Isles.

Pacemakers

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to the answer given by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) to the hon. Member for Eastwood on Friday 9 December, *Official Report*, column 372-33, what information he has received from the Greater Glasgow health board concerning the allegations made to the board on the utilisation of pacemakers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I have had inquiries made of Greater Glasgow health board about the allegations over the improper use of pacemakers made by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). I understand from the health board that the allegations are without foundation and that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden has yet to respond to the health board's request for him to apologise.

Foresty Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the area of land sold by the Forestry Commission in each of its conservancies for each year since 1981.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* The area of land sold by the Forestry Commission in each of its conservancies in each year since 1981 was as follows:

Table 1

(Hectares)

Conservancy	*Year ending* 31 March 1982	31 March 1983	31 March 1984	31 March 1985
North West England		92	1,261	599
North East England		365	508	2,201
East England	1,309	745	1,550	909
South East England		329	523	1,566
South West England		992	838	1,701
North Wales		703	1,826	1,976
South Wales	1,743	747	1,521	1,546
North Scotland		3,348	19,492	9,576
East Scotland		1,399	1,511	3,824
South Scotland	7,371	1,085	4,361	2,599
West Scotland		2,303	11,179	2,360
	10,423	12,108	44,570	28,857

Table 2

(Hectares)

Conservancy[1]	*Year ending* 31 March 1986	31 March 1987	31 March 1988
North England	773	1,056	2,694
East England	1,365	1,355	1,493
West England	651	375	406
Wales	3,229	1,950	977
North Scotland	7,557	3,746	444
Mid Scotland	2,149	1,541	2,759
South Scotland	849	933	156

Conservancy[1]	*Year ending* 31 March 1986	31 March 1987	31 March 1988
	16,573	10,956	8,929

[1] The Forestry Commission structure was re-organised on 1 April 1985 reducing the number of conservancies from 11 to seven.

The figures for year ending 31 March 1982 are only available by country.

DEFENCE

Tucano Aircraft

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects all Tucano aircraft to be in service with the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Sainsbury: The contractor estimates that deliveries will be completed by early 1992.

Radar Contracts

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the examination of the tenders for the European fighter aircraft radar contracts to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is hoped that a decision on the winning consortium in the competition for the nose radar for the European fighter aircraft will be made early next year.

Trident

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next review of the Trident programme is likely to take place.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will announce a revised estimate of the cost of Trident early next year, and at the same time submit a report on the progress of the programme to the Defence Committee. A copy of this report will be placed in the Library of the House.

Foxhunter Radars

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the retrofitting to Tornado aircraft of Foxhunter radars already delivered to the RAF will begin.

Mr. Sainsbury: All Tornado aircraft in front-line service have Foxhunter fitted and the RAF has sufficient radars to meet all its current requirements.

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December 1988 at column *1080*.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many SSNs will be taken out of active service by the year 2000;

(2) how many SSBNs will be taken out of active service by the year 2000.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 13 April 1988 at column *137*.

HMS Dreadnought

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present status and location of HMS Dreadnought; and what plans his Department has for her disposal.

Mr. Sainsbury: Dreadnought has been decommissioned and is berthed at HM naval base, Rosyth. No decisions have yet been taken about how she will be disposed of.

Boeing (Offset Report)

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made in evaluating the offset reports submitted by Boeing under the terms of the airborne warning and control system offset agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Boeing has to date submitted three progress reports claiming offset for contracts valued at $628·3 million. Of the contract values claimed in the first two reports $147·7 million has been approved and $77·5 million rejected as not complying with the agreement. The balance, largely relating to contract values in the third report which has only recently been received, is under evaluation.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 December 1988

DEFENCE

Force Reductions

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the force reductions announced by Mr. Gorbachev.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's Government welcome the reductions in Soviet forces recently announced by Mr. Gorbachev as a significant step towards the elimination of the Warsaw pact's superiorities in conventional forces in Europe. However, even if the announced reductions are implemented, the Warsaw pact will continue to enjoy significant numerical superiorities in key equipments such as tanks and artillery. NATO must, therefore, continue with its existing policy of deterrence whilst seeking balance in conventional forces in Europe through the arms control process.

Military Strategy

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Mr. Manfred Wörner, Secretary-General of NATO, on military strategy.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Mr. Manfred Wörner, Secretary-General of NATO, on military strategy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence last met Dr. Woerner at the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee on 1 and 2 December. They discussed a range of subjects of mutual interest.

Free-fall Bombs

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans for a nuclear replacement for the Royal Air Force's free-fall bombs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply given on 26 October 1988 by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) at columns *281-82*.

United States Defence Secretary

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to meet the new United States Defence Secretary; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence hopes to meet the United States Defence Secretary in the new year. He expects to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

Bar Coding

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to improve stock-taking procedures in the armed forces with a system of bar coding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Comptroller and Auditor General's report on stocktaking in the MOD was published on 1 November 1988 and included observations on the use of bar coding.

The accounting officer, Sir Michael Quinlan, will be giving evidence to the Public Accounts Committee on the contents of the report in due course. Once the PAC has produced its report, the Government's formal response will be given in a Treasury minute, which is in accordance with usual practice.

RAF Machrihanish

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on changes in the past five years to the readiness status of United States Navy weapons units at RAF Machrihanish designated to support the Royal Air Force Nimrod force in time of crisis or war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on the readiness status of military units.

Equipment Expenditure

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been recent trends in the proportion of the defence budget spent on equipment; and what assessment has been made of the reasons for these trends.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to table 2.2 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm 344-II). Planned defence procurement expenditure in 1988-89 allows for a real increase of some 19 per cent. compared with the outturn for 1978-79, using a measure of inflation based on movements in the price of defence equipment. Furthermore, our commercial approach to defence procurement has enabled us to achieve substantially better value for the money which we spend on equipment.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what peacetime attrition rates were assumed for *(a)* Royal Air Force Tornado GR.1 aircraft and *(b)* Royal Air Force Tornado F.2/3 aircraft under the production plan agreed in 1982; and what changes have since been made to these assumed rates.

Mr. Neubert: This information is classified.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes were made to the deployment plans for *(a)* Royal Air Force Tornado GR.1 aircraft and *(b)* Royal Air Force Tornado F.2/3 aircraft as a result of the sale of Tornado aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Oman.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As a result of the 1985 sale to Saudi Arabia the build-up of the RAF's Tornado GR1 force has proceeded slightly more slowly than had originally been planned.

The recently announced sale of Tornado aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Oman is expected to have no effect upon the Royal Air Force's deployment plans.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the actual attrition rate of the Tornado GR.1 since its entry into Royal Air Force service, expressed in terms of *(a)* the rate of category 5 accidents per 10,000 flying hours, and *(b)* the percentage of the total in-service fleet lost in accidents.

Mr. Neubert: Since the entry of the Tornado GR.1 into RAF service in 1980, the major accident rate per 10,000 hours flown was 0·7 as of 16 December 1988. In that time, 17 aircraft (8·5 per cent.) of the total number of aircraft delivered to the service have been destroyed in 16 major accidents.

Vessels (Accidents and Incidents)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all accidents and incidents since 1979 involving Royal Navy vessels and civilian vessels for which compensation was paid by his Department to the owners or operators of the civilian vessel, giving for each accident or incident *(a)* the date, *(b)* the names of the vessels involved, *(c)* the nature and location of the incident and *(d)* the amount of compensation paid.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Territorial Army

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he takes to exclude (i) Fascist groups and individuals and (ii) mentally unstable persons from access to Territorial Army training and weaponry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Prospective recruits into the Territorial Army are required to declare on their enlistment form any affiliations with certain specified causes and must swear on oath that each answer given on the form is a true one. Training of volunteers, particularly of those in their early years of service, is closely supervised and access to weapons and ammunition is, at all times, strictly controlled. All applicants are additionally subjected to stringent medical examinations.

A10 Aircraft

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to how many United States A-10 planes have crashed *(a)* in Britain and *(b)* elsewhere in recent years.

Mr. Neubert: There have been five major accidents involving United States A-10 aircraft in or near to the United Kingdom since 1980, as follows:

Date	*Location*
18 November 1980	Yarmouth
9 January 1981	Donna Nook, Lincs
8 May 1981	Wainfleet, Lincs
12 December 1983	North Sea off Yarmouth
29 February 1984	Suffolk

Accidents involving this aircraft type elsewhere are a matter for the United States authorities.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will bar the United States Airforce A-10 from overflying built-up areas in the United Kingdom until further notice.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Lance Missile

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has endorsed deployment of a new warhead for the Lance missile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 5 December to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mrs. Ruddock) at column *73*.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department will evaluate the implications of papers 8581 and 8582 presented to the fourth international conference on AIDS in Stockholm in 1988 relating to the effects on visuospatial skills amongst males with early HIV infection and relating to a general deficit of vigilance amongst HIV positive individuals; and if he will make a statement regarding his policy of not screening all pilots for HIV.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence is well aware of the content of the papers 8581 and 8582 presented to the fourth international conference on AIDS in Stockholm in 1988. I refer my hon. Friend to my predecessor's reply on 20 May 1988 at col. *611-12*.

Property in Scotland

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what heritable property owned by his Department in Scotland has been sold in the last 10 years for which information is available; to whom it was sold in each case; and what price was obtained in each case.

Mr. Neubert: This information is not readily available in the form requested and the need for commercial confidentiality would in any case limit the amount of information that could be disclosed. A review of our records is being undertaken with the aim of providing some information and I shall write to the hon. and learned Member.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answers of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *70-73*, he will list the approximate value of the heritable property in each case of the bases and establishments owned by his Department in Scotland.

Mr. Neubert: No. This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has any plans to sell any of the bases and establishments owned by his Department in Scotland and listed in his answers of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *70-73*.

Mr. Neubert: There are no firm plans to sell off any of the bases and establishments listed in my hon. Friends answers of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *70-73*. As the hon. Member will appreciate, however, the Defence estate is kept under continuing review to ensure that the area retained is the minumum necessary to meet essential requirements.

Low Flying

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low flying were received by his Department in each year since 1979 from addresses in the Cunninghame, North constituency.

Mr. Neubert: Figures prior to 1986 are not available but since then, according to available records, the Ministry of Defence has received a total of 13 complaints or inquiries about military low flying from addresses in the Cunninghame, North constituency. These are as follows:

Year	*Number of complaints/ enquiries*
1986	3
1987	6
1988 to 31 October	4

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the Gazelle AH 1 helicopter, serial number XZ328, operated by the Army Air Corps, was authorised to operate in low flying area 14 on 5 May; and what information he has on its routing;

(2) if the Lynx AH 1 helicopter, serial number ZX614, operated by 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, Royal Marines, was authorised to operate in low flying area 14 on 5 May; and what information he has on its routing;

(3) if he will make a further statement on the outcome of the inquiry into the incident involving a helicopter and a civilian car near Dalmally, Argyll on 5 May.

Mr. Neubert: I assume that the hon. Gentleman's questions all refer to allegations from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) about an incident involving a helicopter and a civilian car in the Tyndrum area on 5 May. During our investigations, the hon. Lady estimated the time of the incident to be between 3.45 and 4.15 pm. These investigations, as reported by my predecessor in his letter to the hon. Gentleman of 10 August 1988 confirmed that no military helicopters were operating in the Tyndrum area during this period. The Royal Marines 3rd Brigade Air Squadron Lynx AH 1 helicopter, serial number ZX614, referred to by the hon. Gentleman, landed near the Kyle of Lochalsh at around 12.55 pm, and remained on the ground for the rest of the day. The Army Air Corps Gazelle AH 1 helicopter, serial number XZ328, similarly referred to, passed some miles west of Dalmally at around 3 pm and landed at HMS Gannet at 3.30 pm. At 3.48 pm it departed and flew south to RAF Church Fenton, landing at 4.58 pm. I have nothing further to add to my predecessor's letter of 6 December.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list those medical establishments on the Island of Arran over which military low flying is prohibited;

(2) what advice is given to military pilots concerning low-level flying over Lochranza, Arran;

(3) what advice is given to military pilots concerning low-level flying over Lamlash, Arran;

(4) what advice is given to military pilots concerning low-level flying over Brodick, Arran.

Mr. Neubert: Military aircraft are instructed not to overfly major conurbations at low level. Unfortunately it is not possible to avoid many smaller centres of population, although pilots will do so if possible. It is not our practice to release details of the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the total number of low-level terrain-following radar flights in the Highlands restricted area in each year since 1980; and how many of these were flown by *(a)* RAF Tornados, *(b)* RAF Hercules, *(c)* US Air Force F-111s, *(d)* US Air Force RF-4Cs, *(e)* US Air Force MC-130Es and *(f)* other specified types of aircraft;

(2) how many low-flying aircraft movements took place in low-flying area 14 in each year since 1979;

(3) how many low-flying aircraft movements took place in low-flying area 14 (T) in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to publish detailed information about activity in specific low-flying areas. However, the Highlands of Scotland currently experience only a small percentage of the total low-flying activity in the United Kingdom, in comparison with its overall size as a proportion of the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the areas in the United Kingdom where instrument low flying using terrain-following radar is permitted.

Mr. Neubert: At present instrument low flying using terrain-following radar is only permitted in the Highlands restricted area.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence between which hours, and on which days of the week, low flying using terrain-following radar is normally permitted in the highlands restricted area; and if such flying has every been authorised outside those hours.

Mr. Neubert: Low flying using terrain-following radar is only permitted in the Highlands restricted area between the hours of 1500 and 2300 Mondays to Thursdays, Scottish public holidays excepted. I am not aware of any such flying having ever been authorised to take place outside these hours.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that foreign military pilots have read and understood the relevant sections of joint services publication 318 and the United Kingdom military low flying handbook prior to being authorised to fly in the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Neubert: Permission for foreign military pilots to fly in the United Kingdom low flying system is conditional on their receiving a comprehensive face to face briefing by a qualified British Forces or USAF officer. This briefing would cover, inter alia, relevant sections of joint services publication 318 and the United Kingdom military low flying handbook.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many local public meetings to explain the

reasons for military low flying have been held in Scotland by his Department since 1979; and if he will list the location and date of each such meeting.

Mr. Neubert: According to available records, the Minister of Defence has held the following public meetings on low flying in Scotland since 1979:

Location	*Date*
Inverurie, Grampian	12 January 1980
Newton Stewart, Strathclyde	8 July 1980
Dingwall, Highland	18 May 1982
Ullapool, Highland	19 May 1982
Tain, Highland	20 May 1982
Jedburgh, Borders	5 June 1985
Kelso, Borders	6 June 1985
Duns, Borders	6 June 1985
Galashiels, Borders	30 June 1987
Perth, Tayside	15 June 1988

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from members of the public about the effect of low flying in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: Between 1 October and 30 November 1988 the Ministry of Defence received 744 inquiries or complaints about military low-flying training in the United Kingdom.

US Military Personnel

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations in Scotland other than Thurso, Mormond Hill, Edzell, Prestwick, Machrihanish, Holy Loch and Glen Douglas where United States military personnel were assigned in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no other locations in Scotland, other than those referred to by the hon. Member, to which United States military personnel have been assigned since 1979.

Aircraft (Noise)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to introduce a formal requirement for quieter engines to power military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The possibility of noise reduction is one of a number of aspects taken into account in the Ministry of Defence consideration of requirements for new military aircraft engines.

Export Services

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the achievements of the Defence Export Services organisation in 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: This year DESO has again made a valuable contribution to the increasing success of British defence companies in the defence export market. The defence White Paper when it is published will as usual give more details.

Chieftain Tank

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the Chieftain tank replacement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There have been numerous representations from right hon. and hon. Members, industry and members of the public about the choice of a Chieftain tank replacement.

Defence Procurement Contracts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total amount saved by cost reductions on defence procurement contracts let on a competitive basis since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 1 December 1988 at column *352*. However, I should like to draw attention to an error in this answer; in line 11 it reads

"competition can be used to make it impossible",

it should read

"competition can be used, make it impossible".

War Stocks

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of Royal Navy war stocks in each year since 1979, expressed as a proportion of *(a)* national targets, and *(b)* agreed NATO force goals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information on precise levels of war stocks is classified. Since 1979, Royal Navy stockholdings have, in general, been maintained at a level which meets both national and NATO requirements.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of Royal Air Force war stocks in each year since 1979, expressed as a proportion of *(a)* national targets and *(b)* agreed NATO force goals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the precise levels of war stocks is classified. Since 1979, Air Force stockholdings have increased considerably and generally continue to meet both national and NATO requirements.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of Army war stocks in each year since 1979, expressed as a proportion of *(a)* national targets, and *(b)* agreed NATO force goals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the precise levels of war stocks is classified. Since 1979, Army stockholdings have increased considerably and have been maintained at levels which mainly meet both national and NATO requirements.

RAF Fast Jets

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent trends have been observed in accident rates to Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft operating at low level; and what assessment has been made of the reasons for these trends;

(2) what recent trends have been observed in accident rates to Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft; and what assessment has been made of the reasons for these trends.

Mr. Neubert: The major accident rates (1971-87) for Royal Air Force aircraft and for RAF fast jet aircraft were set out in columns *336-38* of the *Official Report* on 18 April 1988. Both have fallen over the years, reflecting the professionalism of the aircrew and support personnel of

the RAF as well as the continuous improvements in aircraft performance. Time spent at low level is not recorded precisely: it is not, therefore, possible to state the major accident rate for fast jets operating at low level. However, since 1979 such accidents account for some 32 per cent. of the total suffered by the RAF. This is compatible with the increased proportion of low-level flying training undertaken by the RAF since 1979.

BAOR (Artillery Regiment)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether plans exist to restore the number of nuclear artillery regiments in the British Army of the Rhine to five.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The four BAOR artillery regiments currently equipped with the 105mm Abbot gun will be equipped in due course with a nuclear capable 155mm howitzer which could be deployed in a nuclear role. This change will not, however, lead to any increase in United Kingdom-assigned nuclear shell stocks in Europe.

RAF Machrihanish (P-3C Aircraft)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to provision for logistics, weapons and spares support for Royal Netherlands Navy P-3C aircraft at RAF Machrihanish in the past four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to discuss details of any such arrangements.

US Chemical Warfare Stockpiles

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information has been provided to Her Majesty's Government by the United States authorities on the size of United States chemical warfare stockpiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It would not be appropriate to comment in detail on the defence capabilities of an ally.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, following the publication of the NRPB report into the incidence of cancers in British nuclear test veterans, he will take action to investigate test veterans' claims of genetic effects and inherited deformity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The findings of the NRPB report give no grounds for investigating the claims by participants in the nuclear test programme that their offspring suffer raised incidence of genetic effects or inherited deformities. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to a similar question on 26 July 1988 at columns *228-30*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will release information relating to the decontamination undertaken to vessels and cargo of the special squadron as part of Operation Hurricane operating under Rear Admiral Torlesse in 1952; if he will give the level and nature of this contamination; and how many personnel were on board HMS Tracker at the time it entered contaminated waters;

(2) where decontamination of HMS Tracker was undertaken, after its contamination in the Pacific; and whether this vessel remained contaminated on entering British waters.

Mr. Sainsbury: The two ships HMS Tracker and HMS Zeebrugge, which experienced low depositions of radioactive material during the Hurricane operation, primarily from fission products, at levels not significant to health, were subject to first stage decontamination and temporary fixative treatment at sea at the scene of the test. Further decontamination and stripping of fixative from the ships and items of cargo was conducted on return to Naval Ports in the United Kingdom. In this operation full decontamination was completed to levels at which no further treatment or precautions were necessary. With its crew and complement of scientists and other visitors, approximately 200 personnel were on board HMS Tracker when she entered mildly contaminated waters during the Hurricane operation. HMS Tracker did not take part in the tests conducted in the Pacific.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will provide information on the effectiveness of film badges and personal dosimeters in detecting the ingestion of particles emitting beta radiation when used by British military personnel during British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s;

(2) what methods were used to detect levels of beta radiation during British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s;

(3) how film badges operated as indicators to overall body contamination of all forms of radiation when used by British military personnel during British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information on the effectiveness of personal film badge dosimeters is readily available in standard textbooks on the measurement of radiation. Their purpose was to assess exposure to ionising radiations by measuring the radiation incident on a piece of photographic film, usually contained in a locket which had a number of "windows" of different thicknesses and filter materials. By examining the film density under these "windows" the health physicist can determine the amount and type of radiation reaching the film, whether it be gamma rays, beta rays or slow neutrons. By definition, it cannot detect radiation form ingested material unless the radiation is capable of penetrating the body and reaching the dosimeter. Nevertheless, by using more sophisticated instruments and detectors to determine the dose from other sources of non-penetrating radiation associated with radioactivity present in the environment, a judgment can be reached as to its contribution to the exposure. Film badge dosimeters can then be used to monitor exposure and allowance made as necessary for the other contributions.

During the United Kingdom test programmes, because strict control was exercised over entry to, and operation within, areas in which surface deposited radioactive material may have been present, uptake and deposition on skin did not lead to doses sensibly above zero.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the film badges issued to British personnel were given to military personnel during British nuclear tests in the Pacific during the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: A full account is given in chapter 3 of the NRPB report of all information on the exposure of participants and of the numbers of service and civilian personnel for whom a record of exposure, or a likelihood of exposure exists. Since, as was explained in the answer to

the hon. Member on 31 October at column *529*, the exact number of badges issued is not known, I cannot provide him with the information he seeks.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the absence of information on the number of film badges issued during British nuclear tests in the Pacific for the accuracy of estimated contamination levels for British military personnel serving in the Pacific during the tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: Lack of information on the precise numbers of film badge dosimeters issued has no implications for the estimated exposures of personnel to ionising radiation. Access to all areas in which the levels of surface deposited radioactive material were such as to require the wearing of film badge dosimeters was strictly controlled and I have no reason to believe that it was not effective *(a)* in controlling the exposure of personnel to ionising radiation and *(b)* in ensuring that the uptake of radioactive materials or depositions on skin did not lead to radiation doses sensibly above zero. The accuracy of dose estimation by current or contemporary standards was and remains acceptable for control purposes and for the dose levels experienced throughout the test programme for the few who were exposed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel received war pensions following active service on Christmas Island during British nuclear tests there in the 1950s and 1960s.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if coconuts, posted home by British military personnel serving on Christmas Island during the 1950s and 1960s, were checked for radioactive contaminaton on Christmas Island and on arrival in Britain.

Mr. Sainsbury: The extensive environmental monitoring which was conducted throughout the operations in the Pacific showed that none of the indigenous products could be expected to be affected to a significant extent by deposition of surface radioactivity. No monitoring of coconuts or related products (such as Copra) was conducted.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what precautions were taken to monitor indigenous edible vegetation and other foodstuffs for radioactivity, during British nuclear tests on Christmas Island during the 1950s and 1960s.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 7 November 1988 at columns *32-33*, which states that fish and sea water were monitored. The bulk of food supplies for service and other personnel were imported to the island and I am not aware that any significant amounts of local produce were used by them. The extensive environmental monitoring which was conducted throughout the operations in the Pacific showed that none of the indigenous products could be expected to be affected to a significant extent by deposition of surface radioactivity.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if water from desalination plants on Christmas Island during British nuclear tests in the 1950s and 1960s used by British or other personnel on the island as a source of drinking water was monitored for radioactivity.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 7 November 1988 at columns *31-32*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the national origin of construction vehicles which were buried and abandoned on Christmas Island after British nuclear tests there.

Mr. Sainsbury: Most of the construction vehicles used on Christmas Island were of British construction, though some vehicles, notably amphibious transport DUKWs, were of United States manufacture. None were buried, but parts of some may have been abandoned or dumped in the sea.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of foodstuffs were buried by the NAAFI following nuclear tests on Christmas Island in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no records to suggest that surplus food supplies were buried on Christmas Island.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role Fanning Island had during British nuclear tests in the Pacific during the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: At the time of the tests, Fanning Island was an important communications point and continued in the same role beyond the date when the test programme was completed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether, on the date of the test for Grapple Y, Mr. Andrew Dickson of Wakefield was among British personnel who were moved nearer to the test site; on how many occasions similar such movements occurred; and how many personnel were involved;

(2) how checks were made to ascertain that service personnel were at a safe location during the Grapple Y test in 1958;

(3) where Mr. Andrew Dickson, service number 22999369, serving with the 12th Independent Field Squadron, Royal Engineers, was located on the date and time of the Grapple Y test on 28 April 1958;

(4) what are the implications for the Ministry's ability to assure ex-Service men on Christmas Island in 1958 that they did not receive a dose of radiation of its inability to ascertain where each individual was at the time of a particular detonation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 31 October 1988 at column *529* referring to the location of named individuals and to the closest distances at which personnel were located during each of the tests in the Pacific area. I have no information on the precise movements or whereabouts of Mr. Andrew Dickson except to state that he was at a safe location. The means by which the checks to ascertain that all personnel, service and civilian (including the local population) were at a safe location were to conduct a full roll call of all personnel know to be present. The countdown sequence to the firing could not continue until it was established that all personnel were at a safe location. The records which have been kept do not now permit the identification of each

individual at the time of each detonation. Nevertheless I am confident that the roll call checks were conducted scrupulously and therefore that all personnel were at safe locations at the time of each detonation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present status of the 12th Independent Field Squadron Royal Engineers; and what was its major function during British nuclear tests in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: The 12th Independent Field Squadron (now known as 12 Field Squadron) is part of 25 Engineer Regiment stationed at Osnabruck, Germany. At the time of the tests its major function was building, construction and related works.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the members of the 12th Independent Field Squadron Royal Engineers who served in British nuclear tests in the 1950s and are still alive.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have no information specific to the present vital status of members of the 12th Independent Field Squadron who served at Christmas Island. The NRPB study includes members of the squadron among the participants.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why members of the 12th Independent Field Squadron Royal Engineers, previously serving on Christmas Island during British nuclear tests, were later involved in a series of experiments conducted at Porton Down; and what was the nature of these experiments.

Mr. Sainsbury: The nature of the duties involved were, to the best of my knowledge, not such as to warrant their being described as involvement in a series of experiments.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how mortality amongst British nuclear test veterans is identified from general mortality; who has overall responsibility for this investigative procedure; and how the records are collated;

(2) what was the annual level of mortality amongst British military personnel serving on Christmas Island, during British nuclear tests undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s; and what were the causes of these mortality levels.

Mr. Sainsbury: The NRPB together with its consultants from ICRF, Professor Sir Richard Doll and Dr. Sarah Darby, were responsible for analysing the mortality data on participants and a full account of the causes analysed is given in the NRPB report. As for the annual level of mortality in the 1950s and 1960s, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 31 October 1988 at column *529*, where he asked for similar information for each year since 1958. The sources of mortality records are described in the NRPB report. The bulk of them came from National Health Service (NHS) and Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) central records, but for those not traced in this way further searches were undertaken.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will release information as to how safe distances were calculated when positioning British military personnel, during British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s;

(2) if he will release the information which led to the calculation of safe distances, beyond which the wearing of film badges was deemed unnecessary, for the Grapple Y test in 1958.

Mr. Sainsbury: The means by which it was established that the locations where personnel were situated at the time of each test were safe were based on standard methods described in textbooks such as "The Effects of Nuclear Weapons" published by United States Department of Defence and United States Department of Energy. These calculations took into account the expected maximum yield and altitude and the effect of the intervening air. These yields for the tests in the Pacific were within range given in answer to a question from the hon. Member on 31 October 1988 at columns *523-26*.

Since the wearing of film badges was not a means of checking the exposure at these locations, they were not necessary for this purpose during any of the tests, including Grapple Y in 1958. What they were provided for was primarily to measure the exposure of personnel who might have access to areas where the radiation levels were high after the detonation.

Trident

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the financial implications to the Trident programme following the delays incurred by the sonar suite component of the tactical weapon system.

Mr. Sainsbury: There has been no increase in the budget for the Trident tactical weapon system associated with reported delays to the sonar suite.

NATO (40th Anniversary)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his department has for celebrating the 40th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is marking the 40th anniversary of NATO in a variety of ways. The following events are planned:

1. an exhibition which will open in London and then tour a number of major centres throughout the country;
2. a flag-raising ceremony at Northwood;
3. a NATO item is proposed for the Royal Tournament;
4. a NATO postmark which will be used by the Post Office for two weeks from 28 March 1989.

Aldermaston (Landscaping)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of landscaping undertaken at the atomic energy research establishment Aldermaston during 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: During 1988 no landscaping work was carried out at AWE Aldermaston. However, some £61,000 has been spent to date in the current financial year on grass cutting and grounds maintenance.

Research and Development

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned target level for defence research and development spending, in terms of *(a)* expenditure and *(b)* proportion of gross domestic product over the next three years.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is expected that defence expenditure on research and development will be £2,272 million in

1988-89. This is approximately 0·5 per cent. of GDP for that year, as estimated in the Autumn Statement. For expenditure in subsquent years to 1990-91 would refer the hon. Member to the statistical series in the "Annual Review of Government funded Research and Development for 1988." Table 2b to page 65, is however based on a somewhat different definition of R and D.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are being introduced to encourage commercial military research and development to supplement Government spending in this area.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry continues to pay very close attention to the level of public expenditure on defence research and development and our commercial approach to defence procurement encourages companies to invest their own money in R and D in order to remain competitive. In addition, we are developing a closer alignment with industry so that it understands our anticipated future requirements and where best to commit its own R and D resources. We also encourage industry to consider the defence export and civil potential of both commercial and MOD-funded R and D.

Damage Compensation

Mr. Macdonald: The ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (1) what agreements or understandings exist between the United Kingdom and (i) Holland and (ii) West Germany to compensate for damage caused by British armed forces to the private property of citizens of these countries on or in their respective territorial waters, airspace and land area; (2) what agreements or understandings exist between the United Kingdom and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states for compensation for damage caused by the armed forces of the latter to the private property of British citizens in or on British territorial waters, airspace or land area.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to the hon. Member.

Shootings (Gibraltar)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which officials of his Department were involved in press briefings given to journalists researching the SAS shooting in Gibraltar; and on what dates such briefings were given.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Defence public relations staff at all levels dealt with inquiries from journalists researching the Gibraltar shootings on many occasions from 6 March. In responding to these inquiries press officers drew on the Foreign Secretary's statement to the House of Commons 7 March 1988.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which officials of his Department met representatives from Thames Television to discuss the programme "Death on the Rock"; and on what dates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The chief of public relations and the director of public relations (Army) met one representative from Thames TV on 21 April 1988.

Exercises

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of providing transportation and accommodation facilities for the observers invited to attend Exercise Keystone in October 1987 under the terms of the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost to the United Kingdom was some £16,000. Exercise Keystone was held in the Federal Republic of Germany, and under the terms of the 1986 Stockholm document the cost of transporting the observers from their point of arrival in the country to their accommodation was met by the Federal Republic.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of providing transportation and accommodation facilities for the foreign observers invited to attend Exercise Purple Warrior in November 1987 under the terms of the Stockholm conference on disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost to the United Kingdom was some £21,000.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Warsaw pact exercises British military personnel have observed at the invitation of Warsaw pact countries; and what was the cost of sending observers to these exercises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Thirty British military personnel have observed 15 exercises at the invitation of Warsaw pact countries under the terms of the 1986 Stockholm document, at a cost to the United Kingdom of some £4,500.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of sending British military observers to the Soviet exercise in the German Democratic Republic in September 1987; whether those observers found that the exercise was not in breach of the agreement on confidence and security building measures reached at the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe in September 1986; and whether they reported difficulties with the arrangements for their inspection.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of sending a British military inspection team to the Soviet exercise in the German Democratic Republic in September 1987 was some £12,000. The British inspection team was satisfied that the exercise was not in breach of the agreement on confidence and security building measures reached at the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe in September 1986. Some minor technical problems excepted, they reported no difficulties with the arrangements for their inspection.

Theatre Nuclear Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the theatre nuclear force restructuring options currently being considered by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation include the deployment of additional United States air force aircraft that are capable of being armed with strategic air-launched cruise missiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Nuclear Weapons (Malta Visit)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the deployment of nuclear weapons on board

Royal Navy ships was discussed in any of his communications with the Maltese Government prior to the visit to Malta of a Royal Navy detachment in June;

(2) whether any undertakings were given to the Maltese Government regarding the deployment of nuclear weapons on board Royal Navy vessels prior to the visit to Malta of a Royal Navy detachment in June.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the invariable policy of successive British Governments neither to confirm nor to deny the presence of nuclear weapons in individual HM ships and no undertakings on this matter were given to the Maltese Government.

BNFL (Audit)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, whether he will state the number of written communications received by the Ministry of Defence from the British Nuclear Fuels plc team carrying out the programme audit at Aldermaston and Burghfield; and on what dates they were received.

Mr. Sainsbury: One, which was received on 15 November 1985.

Procurement Division

Mr. O'Neil: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the responsibilities of the investigating officers employed by the procurement division of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: The PE does not employ investigating officers as such. However, the Procurement Executive of my Department employs qualified accountants and technical cost estimators, whose principal tasks are to assist and advise in the pricing and post-costing of non-competitive contracts.

European Defence Contractors

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has had any consultations with *(a)* Plessey, *(b)* GEC-Marconi, *(c)* British Aerospace or *(d)* Ferranti regarding the development of closer links between European defence contractors.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry has frequent informal discussions with United Kingdom industry on a wide range of topics, including links between defence contractors. Such links are also discussed within the independent European programme group and with the European defence industry group. Consultations between the Ministry and individual companies on matters of comercial sensitivity are treated as confidential.

Crown Servants (Names)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to request all his grade 2 Crown servants and above to give their permission for their names to be revealed on a confidential basis to the Select Committee on Defence, it they apply for permission to accept an outside appointment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Select Committee asked to be provided with information of this nature in its ninth report in the Session 1987-88. The Government expect to publish their response to that report early in the new year.

Blue Vixen Radar Programme

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the delays incurred in the Blue Vixen radar development programme since his answer to the hon. Member for Harrow, East of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *190;* and if these delays will affect the in-service date of the Sea Harrier for the designated Royal Navy squadrons.

Mr. Sainsbury: A delay of some three months occurred earlier this year in the commissioning of the Blue Vixen 'A' model radar in the trials aircraft. This will delay the in-service date by about two months.

Plessey (GEC Bid)

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for competition in defence procurement of GEC's proposed bid for the Plessey company.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD is examining the implications for competition in defence procurement of the proposed bid by GEC and Siemens for the Plessey company, and I have no comment to make at this stage.

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representation has been made to his Department by GEC in connection with their proposed bid for the Plessey company.

Mr. Sainsbury: In examining the defence procurement implications for the proposed bid by GEC and Siemens for the Plessey company, we would, of course, listen to any representations from the parties involved. Any such discussions would be confidential to the parties concerned.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to ensure that the independence of Plessey's defence operations will be effectively preserved under GEC/Siemens bid plans.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD is considering all aspects of the proposed bid by GEC and Siemens for the Plessey company, and I have no comment to make at this stage.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence is available to his Department about the amount of chemical warfare agents stockpiled by the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Prior to the Soviet statement on their chemical warfare (CW) stockpile made in December 1987, the only information available to us on the size of their CW capability were estimates based upon sensitive information.

The Soviet Union claims to possess approximately 50,000 tonnes of CW weapons "in terms of toxic agent". The precise scope of its claims is unclear and the figure is substantially lower than our current classified estimates of the size of their stockpile. We have made it clear to the Soviet Union that it will have to give more information if we are to have any confidence in its claim.

Tank Movements (West Germany)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of tank movements from Detmold depot near Paderborn in West Germany since November 1987.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 19 November 1987 at column *461*. The problems associated with the movement of tanks in the Detmold area have been considered in depth by the Detmold garrison Anglo-German co-ordinating committee. As a result it has proved possible to modify the route taken by armoured vehicles to avoid a local school and, where possible, temporary restrictions have been imposed on the movement of tanks at night. A total ban would be unrealistic given the lack of alternative routes and the shortage of daylight during winter months. Movements of armoured vehicles in the Detmold area are controlled by the Detmold garrison commander who notifies the stadt authorities of all such movements. These movements take account of all jointly agreed guidelines and are kept to the minimum level consistent with operational and training requirements.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) in which year plutonium from Calder Hall was first sent to the United States of America under the 1958-59 United States–United Kingdom mutual defence agreement;

(2) in what year plutonium from Chapel Cross was first sent to the United States under the 1958-59 United States–United Kingdom mutual defence agreement;

(3) in what year plutonium from the Central Electricity Generating Board Magnox reactor was first sent to the United States under the 1958-59 United States–United Kingdom mutual defence agreement;

(4) in what year plutonium from the South of Scotland electricity board Magnox reactors was *(a)* first and *(b)* last sent to the United States of America under the 1958-59 United States–United Kingdom mutual defence agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details of transfers of nuclear materials under the United States–United Kingdom mutual defence agreement are classified.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any plutonium originating in United Kingdom electricity board Magnox reactors has ever been used in a nuclear test explosion.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Procurement Policy

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy in respect of defence procurement with regard to security of supply and the maintenance of technology and employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* We seek to obtain value for money from our procurement expenditure. We therefore use, wherever practicable, competitive tendering. This policy continues to bring significant benefit to the defence budget and to the taxpayer and has promoted the health and efficiency of the United Kingdom defence industry. Where appropriate we do take into account wider, relevant factors including security of supply and industrial implications.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Imperial Weights and Measures

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what studies he has made of the views of consumers on proposed further restrictions on the use of imperial weights and measures at the point of sale.

Mr. Forth: Under the European Community's 1979 units of measurement directive, the Commission is obliged to make proposals to extend the use of metric units.

The Government are therefore considering United Kingdom policy on metrication. A consultation paper inviting comments on proposals to phase out by the end of 1994 the use of the remaining imperial units for most trade purposes was circulated in October to some 700 organisations representing trade, industry, local authorities and consumers.

The consultation period ended recently and the responses, including those from consumers, are now being studied.

Garsurm Parenide Chip

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about any proposed collaborative programme for garsurm parenide chip development.

Mr. Forth: A national programme of collaborative research in gallium arsenide advanced technology has been supported by the Department of Trade and Industry since early 1987. Research into gallium arsenide analogue integrated circuits (chips) is included in this programme, for which £13 million of support is available.

Inner City Initiatives

Mr. Franks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many business people who attended the action for cities presentations have expressed interest in supporting the Government's inner city initiatives.

Mr. Newton: More than 400 of the firms represented at the seven action for cities working breakfasts held during 1988 expressed an interest in suporting the Government's inner city initiatives.

Manufacturing

Mr. Favell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures he has available for the profitability of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Atkins: In 1987, the net real rate of return at current replacement cost for manufacturing companies was 9 per cent. This exceeds substantially the peak reached in the last economic cycle in 1978 and is the highest since 1969. Information on rates of return on capital employed for manufacturing companies in 1987, derived from the national accounts statistics, was published in "British Business" on 30 September.

Butane Gas Canisters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take stronger measures to restrict the sale of butane gas canisters to minors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 provides an adequate legal basis for combatting the problem of solvent abuse. It prohibits the sale of any sniffable product to anyone under the age of 18 who seems likely to want to inhale it for purposes of intoxication. The problem is to make retailers fully aware of the law and to ensure that they obey it. To this end, the Government are funding the distribution of guidance packs to all retailers. We have already helped to pay for a training video for retailers and their staff on how to recognise sniffers and refuse to sell to them. Warning notices for retailers on bulk packs of gas refills are also being introduced.

Fur

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the quantities of fur and fur products imported from North and South Korea for each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: No imports of fur or fur products have been consigned from North Korea in the period 1983 to 1987. Imports from South Korea were as follows:

	m/tonnes
1983	421
1984	198
1985	50
1986	46
1987	38

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics: SITC R2 Items 212.01-09, 613.0, 848.31.
Notes: Figures exclude headgear and footwear which are not separately identified.
1987 figures provisional.

Industry Council

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the Industry Council held on 13 December.

Mr. Newton: The Council considered three items concerning the Community steel industry. First it agreed to the extension for a further three-year period from 1 January 1989 of the present strict rules governing the payment of state aid to European Coal and Steel Community steel producers.

Secondly, the Council reached provisional agreement, subject to the lifting of reserves by two member states, on a compromise solution to the Italian Government's request for Council agreement to its restructuring plan for the Italian public sector steel industry. The compromise would enable the Italian Government to grant only two thirds of the aid for which they had requested authority, in exchange for carrying out all the capacity closures foreseen in the restructuring plan. Discussion of the need for the balance of the aid would be postponed until September 1990, unless there were a rapid downturn in the steel market before then. The Council would take a decision on further Italian capacity closures at the same time. It was agreed that this item should be considered further at the 21 December Internal Market Council.

Thirdly, the Council also discuss social aid for steelworkers, but was unable to reach agreement with the European Commission on the means of funding such measures.

There was also discussion of a Commission proposal for expansion of the EuroInfoCentre network. The Greek presidency also suggested that the Council make a declaration on the Community's policy towards small and medium sized enterprises; it was agreed that this matter should be deferred for discussion in the Council's working groups.

There was also discussion of a Commission report on the Community's textile industry and a statement by the Greek presidency on the Community's mining industry.

Enterprise Initiatives

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will arrange for standardisation of all procedures and paper work issued by the agencies administering enterprise initiatives; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the various procedures and documentation required by agencies administering enterprise initiatives.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The scheme contractors responsible for administering the assisted consultancy schemes under the enterprise initiative are:

Initiative	
The marketing initiative	The Institute of Marketing (through four sub-contractors)
The manufacturing systems initiative	Production Engineering Research Association (PERA)
The quality initiative	PERA (except in the North West which is covered by Salford University Business Services Ltd.)
The design initiative	The Design Council
The business planning initiative	3i Enterprise Support Ltd. (3iES)
The financial and information systems initiative	3iES

The functions of the contractors are carried out in a comparable way, subject to local operational flexibility. These functions are to maintain lists of suitable consultants in their respective areas of expertise, to match the needs of applicants (as identified by a DTI enterprise counsellor) with an appropriately qualified consultant, to assess consultants' reports, and to pay them the part of the fee due from DTI.

As regards the listing of consultants, the same approach is required of all scheme contractors. Each consultancy practice must either have had at least two years' experience as an independent consultancy practice, or one year's experience as an independent practice, plus five previous and consecutive years' relevant consultancy experience by the principals with another practice. In addition, a practice should be able to cite evidence of satisfaction by clients in respect of four assignments.

My Department monitors the performance of the scheme contractors closely and is concerned to ensure that

a standard, high-quality service is delivered. It stands ready to investigate evidence of difficulties experienced by applicant firms or consultancy practices.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from the Swedish Government the full text of the report handed to the Swedish ambassador by the USSR in 1957 of the alleged death of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have the full text of the report given to the Swedish Government by the Soviet Government in 1957 about the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. The report claims that Mr. Wallenberg died in prison in 1947 of natural causes. We have pressed the Soviet Government to give a more detailed account of Mr. Wallenberg's fate, but they have consistently declined to add to the substance of the 1957 report.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from the Swedish Government as much information as is in their possession about the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We already have the limited information available to the Swedish Government on what befell Mr. Raoul Wallenberg. We have repeatedly pressed the Soviet authorities for a full account of Mr. Wallenberg's fate both bilaterally and in the CSCE.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions when he discussed the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg with the Governments of *(a)* Sweden, *(b)* Israel and *(c)* the United States of America since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have discussed this case with Sweden regularly, most recently at the beginning of this year. We also keep in touch regularly with the United States Government, most recently when we both raised the issue in Vienna last month. We have not formally discussed the case with Israel in recent years as far as I can ascertain.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has requested the United States Government to raise the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg with the Soviet Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Such a request would be primarily a matter for the Swedish Government. We do keep in regular touch with the United States authorities about this case and know that the United States Government have raised it with the Soviet Government.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has requested the Swedish Government to raise the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg with the Soviet Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Swedish Government naturally take the lead in efforts to establish Mr. Wallenberg's fate and already regularly raise his case with the Soviet authorities.

Vietnamese Refugees

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the possible convening of an international conference on the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees now in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: The ASEAN countries have proposed the convening of an international conference in 1989 to address the general problem of boat people and Indo-Chinese refugees in south-east Asia. We support this idea and would attend any such conference.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees arrived in Hong Kong in 1988; and how many have been resettled elsewhere.

Mr. Eggar: As at 20 December, 17,984 Vietnamese boat people had arrived in Hong Kong this year. Of these, 8,035 have so far been granted refugee status. A total of 2,745 refugees have been resettled elsewhere.

Colombia

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Colombia regarding political killings and disappearances in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The human rights situation in Colombia is disturbing, and reflects an appalling level of violence in the country. The Colombian Government are deeply concerned and acknowledge that the problem is very serious. Political violence emanates from a range of sources—Right-wing death squads and Left-wing guerrillas as well as drugs traffickers. But I am not aware of any evidence that the Colombian Government are involved. I raised our concerns about human rights with President Barco and with Ministers during my visit to Colombia in August; and our embassy continues to do so.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any assessment has been made of the cost of verifying *(a)* a worldwide chemcial weapons ban and *(b)* a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation/Warsaw Pact chemical weapons ban.

Mr. Waldegrave: We remain committed to negotiating a global, effectively verifiable ban on CW, but until the verification regime has been further elaborated, it is not possible to make detailed estimates of the verification costs of any CW convention. A British Government paper presented to the conference on disarmament last year (Making the Chemical Weapons Ban Effective: CD 769) expressed the view that the costs of implementing a global CW convention were unlikely to be less than for the current IAEA budget.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Act 1944

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be able to reply to the points raised by Mr. C. J. M. McGovern and colleagues in their letter of 6 June concerning section 68 of the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Butcher: I regret that the Department is unable to trace Mr. McGovern's letter. If he will write again I will ensure that he receives an early reply.

Small School, Red House, Norwich

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library copies of all reports on the Small School at Red House, Norwich under the 1944 and 1981 Education Acts.

Mr. Butcher: The latest visit to the school was by Her Majesty's inspector of schools in November. His task was to consider the school's eligibility for final registration under the Education Act 1944 and advise on the timing of an application for approval under the Education Act 1981 as a school suitable for the admission of children with statements of special educational needs.

Copies of Her Majesty's inspector's full inspection reports are sent as a matter of course to the Library. No full inspection reports have been made on this school.

Free School Meals

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the cost of free school meals in each year from 1978-79 to 1990-91 in both cash and real terms.

Mr. Butcher: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The estimated figures contained in the table are based on the number of meals served to pupils on one day in each of the relevant years. More detailed statistics are included in the annual school meals census which is available in the Library of the House of Commons. Information for 1987-88 to 1990-91 is not yet available.

Estimated cost of providing free school meals to pupils

(£ million)

Year	*In cash terms*	*In 1986-87 real terms*
1978-79	118	230
1979-80	114	190
1980-81	125	176
1981-82	148	190
1982-83	175	210
1983-84	200	229
1984-85	215	234
1985-86	[1]—	[1]—
1986-87	250	250

[1] A breakdown of the 1985-86 figures is not available

Education Costs (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is spent on a per capita basis for each child in primary and secondary education in *(a)* the maintained sector and *(b)* the voluntary sector of schools administered by Liverpool education authority.

Mr. Butcher: The average net institutional expenditure in Liverpool education authority in 1986-87 was £980 per pupil in primary schools and £1,445 per pupil in secondary schools. No separate information is available for voluntary schools.

Top-up Loan Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the net cost of the top-up loan scheme to the Government in each of the first five years; and what will be the gross cost to the loan provider in each of the first five years.

Mr. Jackson: Estimates of these costs are set out in annex E of the White Paper, "Top-up Loans for Students".

School Governors

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, where employees take off time for duties as school governors under the terms of the Employment Protection Consolidation Act 1978, he will require employers or local education authorities to remunerate governors in lieu of moneys deducted from their salary.

Mrs. Rumbold: School governors are entitled to reasonable time off from their employment to fulfil public duties. We welcome the fact that many employers arrange time off with pay for governors, but we believe that this is a matter best resolved between employer and employee.

Under section 58 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, a local education authority may, in accordance with the provision of a scheme made by it, pay travelling and subsistence allowances to governors.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to announced the 1989-90 capital allocations for local education authorities in England.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 21 December.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announced his allocations for education capital expenditure for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 21 December.

Primary Headteachers (Retirement)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary headteachers have taken early retirement for each year since 1985 in the following age ranges *(a)* under 50 years, *(b)* 50 to 54 years and *(c)* 55 to 59 years; and how many of these have been as the result of ill health.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

Early Retirements of Primary Headteachers (England and Wales)

Financial year	*Age range*	*Early retirements* *Total*	*On grounds of ill health*
1985-86	[1]Under 50	29	29
	50-54	172	48
	55-59	513	75
	All ages	714	152
1986-87	[1]Under 50	30	30
	50-54	157	53
	55-59	446	81
	All ages	633	164
1987-88	[1]Under 50	28	28
	50-54	155	44
	55-59	386	83
	All ages	569	155

[1] Ill health is the only grounds for early retirement for teachers aged under 50.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of justices of the peace in Stockport and Tameside by electoral ward and sex.

Mr. Newton:

Stockport petty sessional division

	Male	*Female*
Bredbury	5	3
Brinnington	2	—
Cale Green	2	—
Cheadle	3	2
Cheadle Hulme North	2	4
Cheadle Hulme South	4	4
Davenport	5	4
East Bramhall	11	5
Edgeley	1	2
Great Moor	3	4
Hazel Grove	6	1
Heald Green	1	3
Heaton Mersey	4	7
Heaton Moor	7	7
Manor	6	1
North Marple	5	5
North Reddish	—	1
Romiley	5	2
South Marple	10	4
South Reddish	1	2
West Bramhal	6	2
Outside PSD		
Mossley	—	1
	89	64

WALES

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now reply to the urgent matter raised in a letter to him by the hon. Member for Gower, dated 16 December, regarding the public inquiry currently taking place at the Guildhall, Swansea.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will be replying shortly to the letter.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December at column 1080.

Social Security Act 1986

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what aspects of the operation of the Social Security Act 1986 his Department has recently reviewed.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend reviews annually the level of all benefits as required under the 1986 Act. We have recently announced that extra help will be directed towards less well-off pensioners at a cost of £200 million.

Male Retirement

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has for lowering the adult male retirement age to bring it into line with women's retirement age.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pension age is one of the issues discussed in the European Community's equal treatment directive. The question of changing the age of retirement is being considered in the context of this directive.

Child Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans exist to replace the existing child benefit payments with a tax allowance for children.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what date he plans to implement *(a)* section 1, *(b)* section 2 and *(c)* section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department has undertaken any studies on the implementation of section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Each section of the Act will be implemented as and when the necessary resources can be identified and made available. We are making good progress on implementation, with six key sections now in force. We have agreed with the local authority associations that section 7 is the next priority, and detailed work on sections 1, 2 and 3 will follow as soon as possible.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to extend section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and

Representation) Act 1986 to include information relating to the development of community care services for people with physical and sensory disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Section 11 of the Act requires that an annual report be laid before Parliament containing information about the development of health and social services in the community for people with mental illness or mental handicap, and about the numbers of such people who are receiving treatment in hospital. We accepted the need to include this particular provision when the Bill was going through Parliament, but are not convinced that a similar need arises for other types of disability.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures his Department is taking to monitor the implementation of *(a)* section 5, *(b)* section 6 and *(c)* section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Department's social services inspectorate is engaged in several exercises to monitor those sections of the Act which have already been implemented. Reports will be available during 1989.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of Stae for Social Security when he expects information on the number of people receiving the severe disability premium to be available

Mr. Scott: Estimates of the number of people receiving the severe disability premium will be available with the publication of the May 1988 annual statistical inquiry in the summer of 1989.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what procedures he has in place to monitor take-up of the severe disability premium.

Mr. Scott: All who are in receipt of income support and are eligible for the severe disability premium receive it automatically. It is estimated that about 7,000 claimants will receive the premium. Because the number entitled is small, no reliable statistical information will be available on which to monitor take-up.

Claimants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what precise criteria he plans to adopt for unemployed claimants to meet a requirement that they are actively seeking work in order that they can obtain benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Claimants will need to take all apropriate steps to find work. These might include answering newspaper advertisements, registering with employment agencies and contacting employers. The independent adjudicating authorities will determine each case on its merits taking account of factors such as the local labour market, the claimant's capabilities and his work experience.

Fuel Charges (Deductions)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households, at the most recent date for which figures are available, were having weekly deductions made from their supplementary benefit/income support for (i) electricity and (ii) gas *(a)* of under £2 per week and *(b)* in each £1 band above £2 per week up to £30 per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest figures available show that in May 1987 supplementary benefit recipients were having deductions made from their weekly benefit for electricity and gas as follows:

Band £	*Electricity*	*Gas*
0·01– 2·00	4,282	2,538
2·01– 3·00	6,889	2,054
3·01– 4·00	9,937	6,312
4·01– 5·00	13,522	7,488
5·01– 6·00	13,972	13,155
6·01– 7·00	16,603	14,893
7·01– 8·00	16,785	15,293
8·01– 9·00	13,852	17,065
9·01–10·00	11,631	17,419
10·01–11·00	10,077	11,938
11·01–12·00	8,822	9,787
12·01 and over	36,588	20,340

Source: Annual statistical inquiry, May 1987.

Information is not readily available for separate £1 bands over £12·01 per week.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the numbers of gainers and losers in structural terms from the introduction of the Social Security Act 1988 as in "The Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" broken down for Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables of the number of retirement pensioners living within South Shields who were *(a)* financially better off and *(b)* financially worse off after the introduction of new social security changes in April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Statistically reliable estimates cannot be provided below the national level.

Irish Citizens

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of citizens of the Republic of Ireland currently in receipt of social security benefits in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. There is freedom of movement between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and Irish citizens have no conditions attached to their stay in the United Kingdom.

Retirement Pensioners

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many retirement pensioners in South Shields are in receipt of housing benefit transitional payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. However, once the majority of applications have

been processed the transitional payments unit will be able to give details of the number of recipients in certain groups within the area of individual local authorities but not by individual constituencies.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of retirement pensioners in South Shields who were in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit for the three months prior to April and *(b)* income support for the period April to July.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The constituency of South Shields is covered by the local office at South Shields but the boundaries are not conterminous.

The information for the nearest available dates is as follows:

	Nearest date	*Number*
Supplementary benefit (people of pensionable age)	17 November 1987	4,864
Income support (people aged 60 and over)	31 May 1988	4,553

The source is a 100 per cent. of cases in action. These figures may, however, overstate the number of people receiving supplementary benefit. The footnote to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 12 December 1988, at columns *455-56* refers.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many retirement pensioners in South Shields were in receipt of *(a)* standard and certificated housing benefit for the three months preceding April, excluding the housing benefit transitional arrangements, and *(b)* housing benefit for the period between April and July.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Rating Reform

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide an estimate of how much the reduction in the taper from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent. for the community charge will cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that, if the community charge had been fully in place throughout Great Britain during the year 1988-89, the cost of a community charge benefit scheme with a 20 per cent. taper would have been £1,635 million and the cost with a 15 per cent. taper would have been £1,750 million, a difference of £115 million. These estimates are based on the personal allowances and premiums used in the current housing benefit scheme.

Benefits

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish his Department's estimates of the level of public expenditure on the old housing benefit scheme in operation prior to April 1988 in 1988-89 and 1989-90 had the scheme been retained;

(2) if he will publish his Department's estimates of the level of public expenditure on the old family income supplement scheme in operation prior to April 1988 in 1988-89 and 1989-90 had the scheme been retained;

(3) if he will publish his Department's estimates of the level of public expenditure on the old supplementary benefit scheme in operation prior to April 1988 in 1988-89 and 1989-90 had the scheme been retained.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to state what expenditure would have been had the former benefits remained in place. There have been many changes in economic conditions and in public knowledge of benefits. Expenditure would also have depended on decisions about uprating the old schemes.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many supplementary benefit single payments were made for each of his Department's local offices in the counties of *(a)* Cleveland, *(b)* Cumbria, *(c)* Durham, *(d)* Northumberland and *(e)* Tyne and Wear, for the months of July, August and September, in each year from 1985-86 up to and including 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 December 1988]*: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of single payments made by DHSS local offices in (a) Cleveland, (b) Cumbria, (c) Durham, (d) Northumberland and (e) Tyne and Wear during the months of July, August and September 1985, 1986 and 1987

Dates:[1]	*30 July 1985*	*27 August 1985*	*24 September 1985*	*29 July 1986*	*26 August 1986*	*23 September 1986*	*28 July 1987*	*25 August 1987*	*22 September 1987*
Offices[2]									
(a) Cleveland									
Eston	1,107	840	1,064	1,031	928	918	549	584	540
Hartlepool	1,913	1,210	1,600	1,513	1,694	1,028	611	576	494
Middlesbrough	3,042	2,194	2,713	2,921	3,175	2,879	1,839	1,552	1,139
Redcar	961	799	940	835	1,127	1,223	548	573	479
Stockton	2,574	1,718	1,989	3,400	3,168	2,233	1,072	1,125	884
(b) Cumbria									
Barrow	448	366	531	378	342	403	304[3]	304[3]	103
Carlisle	514	521	511	769	667	552	353	336	273
Kendal	46	63	67	53	54	55	44	53	48
Penrith	45	51	57	66	52	53	35	34	48
Workington	514	621	734	448	485	454	240	266	241
Whitehaven	487	421	490	565	356	277	228	217	230
(c) Durham									
Bishop Auckland	1,291	1,048	1,252	1,250	914	934	604	575	537
Chester-le-Street	443	413	564	947	638	451	392	348	405
Darlington	1,116	879	1,163	1,473	1,013	991	890	805	878
Durham	432	431	476	346	263	325	271	242	253
Peterlee	467	371	386	437	425	539	8[4]	318	377
Seaham	265	300	276	450	321	206	163	177	119
Stanley	1,067	920	1,050	944	1,114	879	662	525	590
(d) Northumberland									

Dates:[1]	30 July 1985	27 August 1985	24 September 1985	29 July 1986	26 August 1986	23 September 1986	28 July 1987	25 August 1987	22 September 1987
Ashington	512	350	471	360	290	466	424	399	339
Berwick	50	67	89	69	65	49	61	43	45
Blyth	650	540	640	536	490	614	401	365	311
Hexham	109	106	109	127	109	93	96	53	62
(e) Tyne and Wear									
Gateshead	1,953	1,701	1,917	1,581	2,375	1,894	1,291	1,193	1,051
Houghton le Spring	461	443	580	539	611	297	329	261	320
Jarrow	1,152	867	1,016	1,536	1,452	1,023	552	591	473
Newcastle on Tyne (St. James')	1,920	1,707	1,593	1,582	2,058	1,633	893	960	895
Newcastle on Tyne (East)	1,328	1,069	1,329	1,130	1,016	1,436	661	538	543
Newcastle on Tyne (West)	1,231	1,175	1,428	1,519	1,352	1,457	786	835	644
North Shields	898	809	978	813	892	851	479	562	575
South Shields	1,401	1,125	1,349	1,887	1,604	2,057	767	853	721
Sunderland (North)	2,791	2,428	2,456	2,474	2,088	3,261	1,157	1,197	1,051
Sunderland (South)	1,819	1,807	1,428	1,547	1,676	2,009	1,034	845	689
Wallsend	765	666	835	873	826	746	484	485	367

[1] The Annual Period for DHSS was from April to April and statistics were collected four weekly. For each year the total of 4 four weekly periods is given. In 1987 these ended on 28 July, 25 August and 22 September 1987 and corresponding periods are given for each of the other years.

[2] The Department has 33 offices within the five areas mentioned. However, the boundaries of the local offices and those of the county/administrative district are not conterminous.

[3] These are estimated figures. Local industrial action prevented the provision of accurate statistics.

[4] Because of industrial action only a few payments were made.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the extent and quality of training given to his Department's staff involved in processing the claims of people with a mental illness now living in the community, whether he has any plans to extend this training; and what is his policy on involving the voluntary bodies who represent the claimants in such training.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department's Local Office staff who are involved in customer service receive, as an integral part of their initial training, advice and guidance on how to deal efficiently and sympathetically with people suffering from mental illness. There are no plans to extend this initial training as it is considered to be both satisfactory and sufficient.

More detailed and specific training has been provided for social fund officers. They need to appreciate and recognise the significance of disability, the problems arising and the circumstances pertaining to that disability. To this end, 3½ days of an intensive training period is given over to looking at groups of people with difficulties such as the mentally handicapped and mentally ill. Social fund officers discuss the problems of being discharged back into the community and the stigmatising of the mentally ill. They are also given information on the different types of mental illness, *e.g.* neuroses (anxiety disorders and phobias) and psychoses (depression, manic depression and schizophrenia), to assist them in helping with the claims of these people.

This training is at present the subject of refinement as experience of operating the fund increases.

All the Department's internal training in this area is developed with the advice and guidance of in-house professional resources. This ensures a nationwide consistency of approach which would not be possible if voluntary bodies were to be involved. The logistics of availability of external assistance on the large scale required, would also seem to preclude an alternative approach.

HEALTH

St. Stephen's Hospital, Riverside

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy not to approve any plan for closure of St. Stephen's hospital, Riverside, on a date before 1 June 1989; and if he will consent to the further appointment of junior doctors at the hospital.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) today.

Riverside Health Authority

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has taken a decision on the proposals submitted to him by the North West Thames regional health authority for the re-configuration of health services in Riverside health authority; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: After due consideration, I have today approved the Westminster and Chelsea Project, a set of proposals put forward by Riverside health authority, and endorsed by the regional health authority. The proposals by Riverside health authority include a scheme to build a new teaching hospital which will provide the most up-to-date facilities to meet the challenge of providing health care for the people of Riverside into the 21st century.

There are additional plans to build five nursing homes and two health centres in the riverside district. The project also proposes the closure of the Westminster, the Westminster Children's, the West London, and St. Mary Abbot's hospitals.

I have written today to the chairman of North West Thames regional health authority with my decision.

Transplants

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* heart, *(b)* cornea, *(c)* liver, *(d)* pancreas, *(e)* kidney and *(f)* lung transplants were carried out in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: According to information supplied by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of transplants performed within the NHS in the United Kingdom is:

	Cadaveric Kidneys	*Heart*	*Heart-Lung*	*Liver*	*Lung*	*Pancreas*
1978	849	—	—	—	—	—
1979	842	3	—	—	—	—
1980	988	25	—	—	—	—
1981	905	24	—	—	—	—
1982	1,033	36	—	21	—	—
1983	1,144	53	1	20	—	—
1984	1,443	116	10	51	—	—
1985	1,336	137	37	88	—	10
1986	1,493	176	51	127	3	6
1987	1,485	243	72	172	4	8
1988[1] 1 January to 25 November	[2]1,404	[3]—	[2,3]306	[2]187	[3]—	[2]8

[1] Figures for 1988 amend those provided in a reply to a Question from my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir Michael McNair-Wilson) on 5 December at column *87*.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Heart and heart/lung and lung. Separate figures are not yet available.

Only a proportion of patients receiving corneal transplants are registered with United Kingdom transplant service, but it is estimated that about 1,500 are performed each year.

Consultants

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next proposes to alter the terms and conditions of employment of consultants.

Mr. Mellor: This is an issue we are keeping under review.

Resources

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state for each English regional health authority the percentage resource difference from its resource allocation working party target for each year since 1983 including an estimate for the current year.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

The range between regional health authorities' resource allocation working party targets has narrowed from 26 per cent. in 1977-78 to 11 per cent. in 1988-89. With the exception of North West Thames and North East Thames all regions are now within 4 per cent. of their target.

Region	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern	−3·7	−3·9	−3·0	−1·9	−2·1	−1·6
Yorkshire	−4·3	−3·6	−3·2	−2·2	−2·2	−1·4
Trent	−5·0	−4·6	−4·9	−3·7	−3·2	−2·7
East Anglian	−6·4	−3·8	−3·8	−3·8	−3·8	−4·0
North West Thames	+10·7	+8·0	+7·1	+7·6	+5·7	+4·5
North East Thames	+8·7	+9·0	+9·7	+5·9	+9·0	+7·3
South East Thames	+6·0	+6·5	+5·6	+3·9	+2·7	+1·7
South West Thames	+6·4	+7·3	+4·3	+1·9	+0·3	+1·0
Wessex	−4·9	−4·9	−4·3	−1·4	−0·7	−1·8
Oxford	0·0	−1·5	−2·7	−2·0	−1·8	−2·6
South Western	−4·3	−4·4	−2·4	−2·4	−1·0	−1·4
West Midlands	−3·8	−3·9	−4·8	−3·9	−2·2	−1·3
Mersey	−1·5	−1·4	−0·1	+0·1	+0·2	+1·5
North Western	−4·0	−3·7	−1·8	−0·8	−2·1	−1·4

Cervical Smears (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current waiting time for cervical smears in the Nottingham district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: As at 1 December 1988 the average time taken for cervical smear tests to be processed after reaching the laboratory was four to five weeks.

Ethnic Minority Groupings

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in numbers and percentage, with 100 per cent. being the total United Kingdom population, of the major ethnic minority groupings in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is available only for Great Britain,; it is not available for Northern Ireland. The estimates are based on the annual labour force survey which now covers a sample of about 60,000 households each year. The estimates for ethnic minority groups are subject to sampling error consequently, for many purposes, an average of the last three years figures is taken as the best estimate. An article recently published in "Population Trends 54" gives further details.

Table 1: Estimated population by ethnic group, Great Britain

Ethnic group	1983	1984	Thousands 1985	1986	1987	Average 1985-87
White	50,798	50,895	51,222	51,204	51,573	51,333
West Indian/Guyanese	503	529	547	526	489	521
African	91	109	102	98	116	105
Indian	791	807	689	784	761	745
Pakistan	355	371	406	413	392	404
Bangladeshi	81	93	99	117	116	111
Chinese	106	109	122	113	126	120
Arab	69	63	61	73	79	71
Mixed	196	205	232	269	263	255
Other	109	75	117	164	141	141
Not stated	879	829	637	607	467	570
Total population	53,979	54,084	54,235	54,370	54,524	54,376

Table 2 Proportions of the population by ethnic group, Great Britain

Ethnic group	1983	1984	Percentage 1985	1986	1987	Average 1985-87
White	94·1	94·1	94·4	94·2	94·6	94·4
West Indian /Guyanese	0·9	1·0	1·0	1·0	0·9	1·0
African	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
Indian	1·5	1·5	1·3	1·4	1·4	1·4
Pakistan	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·8	0·7	0·7
Bangladeshi	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
Chinese	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
Arab	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Mixed	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·5
Other	0·2	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·3
Not Stated	1·6	1·5	1·2	1·1	0·9	1·0
Total Population[1]	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

[1] Components may not add precisely to the total because of rounding.

Salmonella

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date his Department first became aware of the nature of the salmonella problem giving rise to the chief medical officer's statement of 26 August; and if he will list all public warnings or information issued on this subject since 26 August.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 13 April 1988, accumulating evidence on food poisoning associated with salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 was reviewed by my Department and the public health laboratory service.

The following public warnings and information have been issued since 26 August by my Department:

2 September Letter to Chief Environmental Health Officers of local authorites asking them to issue advice locally.

5 September Letter to major catering and hotel organisations with a copy of the 26 August public warning.

21 November Public warning, repeating warning on raw eggs and giving advice about lightly cooked eggs.

5 December Repeat public warning, adding that it was advisable for vulnerable people to avoid eating lightly cooked eggs.

14 December (Jointly with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) announcing advertisements to be placed in leading newspapers on 16-18 December.

NHS Property and Land

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to publish annually information on the sales of National Health Service property and land in each district health authority area.

Mr. Freeman: Information on property sales by district health authorities will be available centrally for the first time from about June of next year. Information will then be available on request.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the sales, with sums received by the Trent regional health authority, for the sale of National Health Service properties and land since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table. It excludes transactions of less than one acre or of less than £50,000. All proceeds from disposals are retained by health authorities for reinvestment in the Service.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Property and Address	Date of Sale	Price obtained £
1979-80		
1 Former Swithland Recovery Home, Leicestershire	September 1979	92,500
2 Former Seely House Convalescent Home, Skegness	March 1980	90,000

Property and Address	Date of Sale	Price obtained £
1980-81		
1 Former Hollow Meadows Hospital, Sheffield	January 1981	88,273
2 Land at Bretby Hall Hospital, near Burton-on-Trent	September 1980	128,900
3 Former Royal Hospital, Sheffield	November 1980	350,000
4 Thundercliffe Grange, Rotherham	May 1980	65,000
5 Former Woodlands Court Hospital, Boston	February 1981	55,328
6 Ruddington Hall Hospital, Nottinghamshire	November 1980	253,000
7 Former Holbrook Maternity Home, Derbyshire	June 1980	130,000
8 Branston Hall Estate, Lincolnshire—Partly sold	August/October 1980	118,000
1981-82		
1 Land at Conisborough Hospital, Conisborough	November 1981	80,200
2 Land at St. John's Hospital, Lincoln	February 1982	99,000
3 2 Houses and Land at Branston Hall Estate, Lincolnshire	March 1982	236,500
4 Bromhead Nursing Home, Nettleham Road, Lincolnshire	December 1981	225,000
5 Wales Court, Kiveton, Sheffield	September 1981	123,000
1982-83		
1 Park House, 369 Woodborough Road, Nottingham	June 1982	162,000
2 The Doctors House and Land at Branston Hall Estate, Lincolnshire	March 1983	125,500
3 The Royal Infirmary, Sheffield	September 1982	250,000
4 The Cedars and Woodthorpe Hospitals, Nottingham	February 1983	175,000
5 Albolton Hall, Nottingham	May 1982	85,100
6 Moorgate Hospital, Rotherham	July 1982	192,000
7 Parwich Hospital, Parwich, Derbyshire	April 1982	115,000
1983-84		
1 Land at Ashton Hall, Derbyshire—Lot 1	December 1983	Not given
2 The Women's Hospital, Nottingham	June 1983	220,000
3 The Firs Hospital, Nottingham	July 1983	212,753
4 Walborne, 222 Graham Road, Sheffield	February 1984	191,000
5 Storth Oakes, 229 Graham Road, Sheffield	April 1984	150,000
6 Site of the former Westdale Hospital, Nottingham	May 1983	75,000
7 The Retreat Hostel, Nottingham	November 1983	51,250
1984-85		
1. Foxby Hill Hospital, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire	November 1984	70,942
2. Ashgate Maternity Home, Chesterfield, Derbyshire	February 1985	170,000
3. Draycott Hospital, Derbyshire	September 1984	167,500
4. Hawthorne House, Middlewood, Sheffield	April 1984	60,000
5. Mortomly Hall, Sheffield	June 1984	75,000
6. Land at Mapperley Hospital, Nottingham	March 1985	587,535
7. Aughton Court Hospital, Rotherham	March 1985	191,250
8. Rosehill Hospital, Rawmarsh, Rotherham	October 1984	182,000
1985-86		
1. Markfield Hospital, Leicestershire	November 1985	346,989
2. The Nurses Home, Bretby Hall Hospital, Derbyshire	December 1985	86,500
3. Debdale Hall Recovery Hospital, Nottinghamshire	May 1985	152,000
4. The Lawn Hospital, Lincoln	March 1986	425,000
5. Ellen Towle Recovery Home, Leicestershire	January 1986	125,500
6. Morton Hospital, Derbyshire	December 1985	110,000
1986-87		
1. Zachary Merton Recovery Home, Leicester	January 1987	195,000
2. Land at Framland Hospital, Melton Mowbray	April 1986	120,000
3. The Royal Hospital, Chesterfield	May 1986	400,000
4. Alverley House, Doncaster	September 1986	150,000
5. Durley Hall Maternity Home, Derbyshire	February 1987	185,000
6. Dunluce, 377 Fulwood Road, Sheffield	April 1986	116,000
7. The Orchards, Makeney Hospital, Derbyshire	May 1986	76,000
8. Listerdale Hospital, Wickersley, Rotherham	January 1987	285,000
1987-88		
1. Ridgway Hospital, Belper	March 1988	200,000
2. Land at Penmore Hospital Chesterfield—1st Phase	November 1987	229,750
3. The Grange Children's Unit, Etwall Road, Mickleover and adjourning land	September 1987	90,000
4. Rough Heanar Allotments, Kingsway Hospital, Derbyshire	September 1987	475,000
5. Derbyshire Hospital for Women	December 1987	403,000
6. Ilkeston General Hospital, Derbyshire	March 1988	385,000
7. Francis Dixon Lodge Towers Hospital, Leicester	January 1988	280,000
8. Glengate Hospital, Desford	December 1988	420,000
9. Louth and District Hospital Lincolnshire	August 1987	305,000

Property and Address	Date of Sale	Price obtained £
10. Coppice Hospital, Ransom Road Nottingham	May 1987	450,000
11. Land at rear of Fairfield House, Rotherham	May 1987	340,000

Mentally Ill People, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will instruct the central Nottinghamshire district health authority to provide a list of the moneys payable to it from other health authorities for the provision of services for the mentally ill since 1987.

Mr. Freeman: It is for individual health authorities to plan local services and manage their budgets accordingly and it would be inappropriate for me to intervene in the way suggested. However, I understand that arrangements have been made to facilitate the transfer of patients from Saxondale hospital into central Nottinghamshire. I am sure that if the hon. Member contacts Mr. Teeman, the chairman of the district health authority, he will be able to obtain all available details.

Private Hospice Patients (Drugs)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the present arrangements for all patients in non-National Health Service hospices to obtain necessary drugs under the National Health Service; and whether he has any plans to make present arrangements more effective.

Mr. Mellor: We are aware that some hospices fund current arrangements insufficiently flexible, and the scope for improvements is under consideration.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical directors of the 75 independent hospices in England and Wales do not have the right to prescribe drugs and appliances under the National Health Service for patients in their care.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Nurses (Regrading)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Oldham district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Numbers of old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Oldham

Previous grade	Staff in post (whole time equivalents)	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	279·12	244·28	34·84	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Nursery Nurse	11·10	0·00	11·10	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Enrolled Nurse[2]	199·91	—	—	107·95	3·00	88·96	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	30·25	—	—	0·00	30·25	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	0·00	—	—	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Nurse[2]	195·93	—	—	—	47·81	148·12	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Midwife[2]	40·00	—	—	—	5·00	35·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Deputy Sister[2]	26·00	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	26·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Nursing Sister II[2]	149·45	—	—	—	—	—	78·45	69·00	2·00	0·00
Midwifery Sister II[2]	70·00	—	—	—	—	—	26·00	44·00	0·00	0·00
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	63·45	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	62·45	1·00	0·00
Nursing Sister I	33·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	20·00	13·00	0·00
Midwifery Sister I	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	4·00	2·00	0·00
Health Visitor	51·0	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	51·00	0·00	0·00
Senior Nurse 8	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	0·00	1·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	0·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Senior Nurse 7	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	1·00	9·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	0·00	1·00
Clinical Teacher	0·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Fieldwork Teacher	14·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	7·00	7·00	0·00
Practical Work Teacher	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	4·00	0·00
Tutor	0·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00
Tutor Midwife	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	2·00
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Nurse	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Deputy Sister	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Sister II	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Others	2·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	2·00
TOTALS	1,189·21	244·28	45·94	107·95	86·06	272·08	130·45	257·45	30·00	15·00

[1] Excludes some additional "G" posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Sandwell district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitor staff
Numbers of old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1st April 1988: Sandwell

Previous grade	*Staff in post (Whole-time equivalents)*	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade*								
		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*[2]G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Auxiliary	299·10	253·73	45·37	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Nursery Nurse	11·59	0·00	11·59	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Enrolled Nurse[1]	350·91	—	—	192·20	108·73	49·98	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Enrolled District Nurse[1]	21·12	—	—	0·00	21·12	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Senior Enrolled Nurse[1]	10·64	—	—	0·00	8·64	2·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Nurse[1]	156·62	—	—	—	65·12	88·03	3·47	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Midwife[1]	32·60	—	—	—	0·00	32·60	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Deputy Sister[1]	23·20	—	—	—	0·00	15·81	7·39	0·00	0·00	0·00
Nursing Sister II[1]	167·06	—	—	—	—	—	74·53	88·53	3·00	1·00
Midwifery Sister II[1]	56·98	—	—	—	—	—	12·58	44·40	0·00	0·00
District Nurse (Sister II)[1]	49·19	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	46·19	3·00	0·00
Nursing Sister I	6·19	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	2·53	0·00	3·66
Midwifery Sister I	0·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·0
Health Visitor	54·91	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	54·91	0·00	0·00
Senior Nurse 8	28·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	1·00	9·00	18·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	1·00	5·00
Senior Nurse 7	11·30	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	1·00	1·00	9·30
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	2·00	0·00
Clinical Teacher	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	3·00	0·00
Fieldwork Teacher	10·87	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00	10·87	0·00
Practical Work Teacher	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	0·0	0·00	8·00	0·00
Tutor	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	2·00
Tutor Midwife	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·00	2·00
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Staff Nurse	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Deputy Sister	12·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	12·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Sister II	3·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	3·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Others	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Totals	1,328·28	253·73	56·96	192·20	215·61	188·42	100·97	238·56	40·87	40·96

[1] Excludes Post Basic Students
[2] Excludes some additional "G" posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.

Tobacco

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the British adult population continue to smoke any tobacco products.

Mr. Freeman: The general household survey of 1986 shows that 37 per cent. of people aged 16 and over smoked cigarettes, cigars, pipes or a combination of these.

Hospitals (Operations)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* private and *(b)* National Health Service hospitals, by categories, currently operate; and what are the comparable figures for 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The latest available information is given in the tables:

Number of National Health Service Hospitals: England

Classification	*1979*	*1986*
Acute	563	466
Mainly Acute	149	163
Partly Acute	65	61
Mainly long-stay	71	73
Long-stage	69	75
Geriatric	264	241
Pre-convalescent	36	7
Convalescent	16	6
Rehabilitation	15	13
Isolation	7	2
Maternity	118	61
Mental Illness	177	197
Mental Handicap	250	349
Orthopaedic	21	16
Tuberculosis and Chest	15	4
Tuberculosis and Chest and Isolation	3	—
Children's (Acute)	30	23
Eye	20	17
Other	130	109
Total	2,019	1,883

Source: SH3 returns.

Figures are based on a count of hospitals which were open during all or part of a year.

Number of Independent Sector Hospitals: England

Classification	*1979*	*1988*[1]
Acute	134	188
Psychiatric	8	23
Total	142	211

Source: Independent Hospitals Association.
[1]To July 1988.

Hospital Closures (London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will list the hospitals in each of the four health regions covering Greater London now being considered for closure.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally.

Food Poisoning

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to how many outbreaks of food poisoning were investigated by environmental health departments, and as to in how many cases the source of the outbreak was identified.

Mr. Freeman: Comprehensive information is not held centrally in the form requested. Cases of food poisoning are routinely reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre, which collects, analyses and interprets epidemiological data for those involved in the prevention of communicable deseases including food poisoning.

Food Production Premises (Inspections)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has as to how many food production premises were inspected by local authority environmental health departments in 1986-87; and how many were found to be unsatisfactory;

(2) if he will list by year since 1985 and by authority the number of food inspections carried out by environmental health officers.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally.

Food Handling Training

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce compulsory food handling training for all involved in the processing and retailing of food.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 14 December at column *601*.

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of the royal national orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore.

Mr. Mellor: The royal national orthopaedic hospital at Stanmore provides an unrivalled centre of orthopaedic expertise, and we are anxious to safeguard its national role and to ensure that it continues to maintain the standards of excellence for which it is world famous. The hospital draws most of its patients from the area in which it is situated, and so, in order to improve its links with the local community, I have asked the regional health authorities concerned to seek the views of all interested parties with a view to moving the management responsibility for the hospital from Bloomsbury to Harrow.

Elderly People (Deaths)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people over 75 years died in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to the reply, 2 December 1988, c. 441-42]*: I regret that there were errors in the previous reply.

The figures for female deaths for November 1987 should read 15,537 and for January 1988 total deaths should read 30,669.

Day Admissions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district, region and special health authority the total waiting list for day admissions in March 1988 and September 1987.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* The national, regional and combined special health authority waiting list figures for day admissions for September 1987 and March 1988 were published in Department of Health statistical bulletins 2/6/88 and 2/12/88 on 27 April and 26 October 1988 respectively. Copies are in the Library. The figures for district and individual special health authorities have also been placed in the Library.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each region, each district, each special health authority and for the nation as a whole *(a)* the number of acute beds available for each year from 1979 to 1987 and *(b)* the number of non-acute beds available from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 25 November 1988]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library and I have written to the hon. Member with a copy of such information.

PRIME MINISTER

Rating Reform

Q71. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister what information she has as to how many organisations in Scotland are organising means of opposition to the poll tax; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Attempts to organise opposition to the community charge in Scotland are—as we expected—proving to be utterly futile and a waste of time.

Wilmington, Kent

Q86. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Wilmington, Kent.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Denmark

Q103. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Denmark

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Commission

Q119. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her communications with President Delors about the portfolio of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) to the European Commission.

The Prime Minister: The allocation of portfolios is a matter for the President and the new Commission to decide. I have not had any communication with him on this matter.

Correspondence

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister (1) on how many occasions following requests from the hon. Member for publication in the *Official Report*, she has refused to publish the texts of letters from herself to hon. Members, between *(a)* 1979 to 1983, *(b)* 1983 to 1987 and *(c)* 1987 to the current date;

(2) pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Brent, East, *Official Report*, 15 December, column *654*, if she will state on what basis publication of the letter to the hon. Member was refused;

(3) what is her policy concerning the publication of exchanges of letters between hon. Members and herself in the *Official Report*.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave the hon. Gentleman on 15 December 1988 at column *654*.

Engagements

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. Gill: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRANSPORT

Roads (Cumbria)

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spent on roads in Cumbria in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1983-84 and *(c)* 1987-88; and what is the proposed expenditure for the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We spent £11·9 million in 1983-84 and £10·1 million in 1987-88 on building, improving and maintaining trunk roads and motorways in Cumbria. Figures for 1978-79 are not available by country. Proposed expenditure levels for 1989-90 and 1990-91 have not yet been determined.

We also support expenditure on the county council's more important local roads through the transport supplementary grant system.

Rail Accidents

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the total amount of significant collisions on the railways recorded for the years 1982 and 1987; and what percentage change this represents;

(2) what is the total of significant derailments on the railway recorded for the years 1982 and 1987; and what percentage change it represents.

Mr. Channon: The information requested is available in tables 2 and 3 of the chief inspecting officer of railways' annual report for 1987. There were 54 significant collisions in 1982 and 64 in 1987; an increase of 18·5 per cent. In 1982 there were 129 significant derailments, and 136 in 1987: an increase of 5 per cent.

Comparison of individual years can be misleading because, with the relatively small numbers involved, wide fluctuations from year to year can occur. The number of collisions in 1987 was actually three less than in 1986, the number of derailments three more. A clearer picture can be obtained by comparing the number of accidents in a year with the average over the previous five years. The average number of collisions given in table 2 is 61; and of derailments (table 3), 134.

Other factors can also influence the number of accidents. Because of the railway strike in that year, 1982 is not a good year for comparison. In 1982 the number of train miles (263 million) was 7 per cent. less than in 1987 (283 million). The average for the years 1982 to 1986 was 281 million train miles.

Rail Casualties

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the total casualties killed and major injuries for accidents on British Railways for the years 1982 and 1987; and what percentage change it represents.

Mr. Channon: A breakdown of accident statistics in the form the hon. Member has requested for British Rail as distinct from railways generally is not immediately available. I am having inquiries made as to what further

information could be made available. The figures for railways as a whole from 1983 to 1987 are set out in the appendices to the annual report on railway safety during 1987, of which a copy is in the Library. 1982 is not a good year for comparison because there was a railway strike in that year and as a result rail travel was about 8 per cent. lower than normal.

Dearne Towns Link Road

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make additional funding available to the south Yorkshire local authorities of Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster to enable them to construct the Dearne towns link road.

Mr. Bottomley: The Dearne towns link road is a local road scheme for which Barnsley and Doncaster metropolitan councils are responsible as local highway authorities. Rotherham borough council is not involved. The normal procedure for a local authority to obtain Government grant aid toward such a scheme is through the transport supplementary grant system. Both authorities have indicated their intention to apply for this grant based on a start of construction in the 1990s.

Barnsley borough council has exceptionally applied to the Secretary of State for 100 per cent. grant under section 272 of the Highways Act 1980 in respect of the new road section of the link, that is, between M1 and Darfield. The application is under consideration.

West London Assessment Study

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the options listed in the west London assessment study stage 2a report he has instructed Sir William Halcrow and Partners to develop during stage 2b.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have not yet taken any view on the preliminary options produced by the study consultants. This must await the submission of the consultant's report in the summer 1989.

Nuclear Waste (Transport)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how often nuclear waste is transported by train through Kirkstall in west Leeds;

(2) how long trains transporting nuclear waste stop and park in the Kirkstall area of Leeds.

Mr. Portillo: The timing and routing of radioactive consignments are a matter for British Rail. I am informed that irradiated nuclear fuel from power stations would not normally travel via Leeds. All such consignments must comply with the internationally agreed safety requirements.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what emergency plans are in existence and able to be brought into effect in the event of a major accident resulting from the transportation of nuclear waste by rail through Kirkstall in west Leeds.

Mr. Portillo: In the event of an emergency the plans provide for British Rail staff to alert the civil emergency services, which are able to call upon any necessary specialised advice and assistance.

Train Guards

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trains have run in each of the last 10 years without a guard in the guard's van at the rear; and what percentage this is of all trains running in each year.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not held by my Department. The hon. Gentleman should approach the British Railways Board for such details.

Signalmen

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many signalmen in each of the last three years have been working less than *(a)* 40 hours per week, *(b)* 40 to 44 hours per week, *(c)* 45 to 49 hours per week, *(d)* 50 to 54 hours per week, *(e)* 55 to 59 hours per week and *(f)* over 60 hours per week, and what percentage of the total is that in each case.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not held by my Department. The hon. Gentleman should approach the British Railways Board for such details.

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Cyprus (Air Routes)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the possibility of licensing a direct air route from London to Ercan airport, Cyprus.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus do not authorise flights to Ercan.

Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Correspondence)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the letter sent on 14 December by Commissioner Stanley Clinton Davis to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, about his visit to Strasbourg; what reply is being sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The categories of driver licensing proposed by the European Commission would mean a second test and tougher health standards for non-commercial minibus drivers. This would cause immense problems for community and voluntary organisations. The important groups they serve would suffer as a result.

The visit to Strasbourg at the invitation of United Kingdom community transport operators enabled me to discuss with MEPs of all parties and nationalities the best means of reconciling the key objectives of safety and mobility, particularly for the old and disabled. I advised Commissioner Clinton Davis of this. A copy of the correspondence has been placed in the Library.

The Government's position on this issue is clear. We want to support a modified directive. We want to maintain and enhance mobility for special needs and common interest groups. We want to maintain and enhance safety. We do not want additional driving and medical tests for non-commercial drivers of minibuses.

Tyres

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the sale of part-worn remould tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no reason to prohibit the sale of part-worn new or remoulded tyres. We are reviewing the Tyres (Safety) Regulations in the light of the recently amended British standard.

Train Cabs (Radios)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the safety implications of the installation of two-way radios in engine cabs on busy railway routes.

Mr. Portillo: I discuss a variety of matters including safety questions at regular meetings with the BR chairman. BR rolling stock for driver-only operation will be fitted with radios, and BR is currently fitting radios to existing main line locomotives and high-speed trains.

Roads (North-west)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate for roadbuilding work in the north-west during 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to spend some £90 million this year on building, improving, and maintaining trunk roads and motorways in the north-west. This includes £39 million on the seven major contracts I mentioned when answering my hon. Friend's question of 28 November 1988 at column *425*.

We are also supporting expenditure on the region's more important local roads through some £25 million of transport supplementary grant.

British Transport Police

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chief constable of the British transport police; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: In recent days I have met assistant chief constables Palmer and MacGregor and the main subjects have been the Clapham rail crash and the increase in numbers of officers policing the Underground.

Aircraft (Alcohol)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to prohibit the consumption of alcohol on board aircraft within British air space.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Concessionary Fares

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether London Regional Transport has requested his agreement to the imposition of the reserve free travel scheme despite agreement between all London boroughs to continue the present voluntary concessionary fares scheme.

Mr. Portillo: No. There is no requirement for LRT to do so.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the disagreement between London Regional Transport and the London boroughs, he will direct London Regional Transport to continue the existing concessionary fares scheme.

Mr. Portillo: No. The provision of travel concessions in and in the vicinity of London is governed by sections 50 to 53 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what circumstances London Regional Transport would be able to impose the reserve free travel scheme on the London boroughs.

Mr. Portillo: Section 51 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 provides that the reserve free travel scheme for London residents will come into effect if immediately before 1 January in any accounting year of London Regional Transport it appears to LRT that there are not in force arrangements, which will apply throughout the following accounting year, for the provision of concessions which satisfy the requirements of section 53 as to scope and uniformity, and for reimbursement by the London boroughs of the cost of those concessions to LRT. In such circumstances LRT is under a statutory duty to implement the reserve scheme.

Bicycle Lights

Mr. Iain Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to tighten the regulations governing the fitment of front and rear lights on bicycles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Front and rear lamps have had to be fitted and used on pedal cycles at night for many years. It is important for cyclists to see and to be seen. We are currently consulting about requiring compliance with a British standard for front lamps. One already applies to rear lamps.

Vehicle Excise Duties

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current level of excise duties for all categories of vehicles in each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Different member states have different tax systems and tax vehicles on different bases. I will write to the hon. Member giving the most recent available information for the United Kingdom and other states.

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Roads (Safety Fences)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will approve the use of wire rope safety fences on trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A design of wire rope safety fence that has been demonstrated as fully complying with the current standard for safety fencing has been developed by British Ropes Ltd. Representatives of the Department have witnessed the demonstrations. A detailed specification for the use of this design on trunk roads is being prepared. It is intended to introduce formally this type of fence as soon as practicable, subject to its notification to the European Commission and other member states as required under European law.

Neither this type of safety fence nor the tensioned corrugated bean safety fence currently in use on our roads is designed to contain vehicles heavier than 1·5 tonnes. The main aim is to contain cars—the great majority of vehicles on our roads. Fences designed to retain heavier vehicles might do more damage to cars.

Rail Accident (Clapham)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals British Rail has made to him to replace rolling stock lost in the Clapham accident.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail intends to order very quickly six additional four-car class 319 units as an extension to the order for 20 units that we authorised this summer. These will replace the six units written off in the Clapham junction accident. The replacement units should be delivered in the course of 1989.

Road Network

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the rail network, in the light of recent evidence including that from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd., that the road network is incapable of holding the projected future volume of traffic.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* British Rail is already investing in the railways at the highest rate for 20 years and further increases are planned, but as only 7 per cent. of total passenger kilometres and 13 per cent. of freight tonne kilometres (excluding water and pipelines) are by rail this can have only a limited effect on road traffic.

In view of London's particular problems, we have set up the central London rail study, which is examining ways of relieving congestion in the central areas. I expect to receive the study report shortly.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the United Kingdom airports *(a)* that have been used since May 1986 and *(b)* that are currently being used for the transport of gramme samples of plutonium; and with what frequency;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom airports *(a)* that have been used since May 1986 and *(b)* which are currently used for the transport of plutonium in larger than gramme samples;

(3) whether Bournemouth, Hurn, airport is still being used for the transport of plutonium products by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; what is the total amount of separated plutonium transported through the airport *(a)* since such operations began and *(b)* since May 1979; and what proportions of the above constituted shipments of plutonium as (i) plutonium dioxide powder, (ii) plutonium in fresh fuel elements, and (iii) plutonium in other forms.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* I understand that the airports used currently and since May 1986 for the transport of gramme samples of plutonium are Manchester and London Heathrow. The United Kingdom airports used currently and since May 1986 for the transport of larger than gramme samples of plutonium are Carlisle, Dounreay, Wick and Bournemouth (Hurn).

I understand that the UKAEA uses Bournemouth (Hurn) airport for the occasional shipment of nuclear materials, including plutonium, for research purposes in support of the civil nuclear power programme. All consignments of radioactive materials are subject to the International Civil Aviation Organisation's technical instructions for the carriage of radioactive materials by air. The Department does not keep statistical information about the nature and quantities of material transported.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the United Kingdom ports which *(a)* have been used and *(b)* are currently being used for the transport of separated plutonium as (i) plutonium dioxide powder, (ii) plutonium in fresh fuel elements and (iii) plutonium in other forms.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* I understand the United Kingdom ports that have been used to transport separated plutonium are Poole, Liverpool, Southampton, Dover, Hull, Newhaven, Portsmouth, Workington and Scrabster.

The ports currently being used for such transport are Newhaven, Portsmouth, Liverpool (all for samples and specimen fuel pins only), Workington and Scrabster. The Department does not keep statistical information about the nature and quantities of material transported.

THE ARTS

Works of Art

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what action he is taking to ensure that works of art remain in the public domain.

Mr. Luce: Works of art in this country are and will continue to be in both private and public ownership. The management of the collections of public institutions is a matter for their trustees or governing bodies, working within the legislative or other framework which applies in particular cases.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Order

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General (1) how many complaints he has received under section 18 of the Public Order Act 1986; how many such complaints were initiated *(a)* by the police, *(b)* by the Commission for Racial Equality, *(c)* by hon. Members and *(d)* by members of the public; and how many of these complaints were forwarded to the Crown Prosecution Service for further consideration;

(2) how many complaints he has received under section 19 of the Public Order Act 1986; how many such complaints were initiated by *(a)* the police, *(b)* the Commission for Racial Equality, *(c)* hon. Members and *(d)* members of the public; and how many of these complaints were forwarded to the Crown Prosecution Service for further action.

The Attorney-General: Since sections 18 and 19 of the Public Order Act 1986 came into force last year, I have

received four complaints of alleged offences contrary to section 18 and 26 complaints of alleged offences contrary to section 19, though the circumstances of one of these complaints was such that allegations of both offences were raised at the same time.

It is not uncommon for allegations of offences under section 19, in particular, to be made by more than one complainant, over a period of time. Of the complaints to which I have referred, one came to me initially from the Commission for Racial Equality, four initially from hon. Members and 15 initially from members of the public.

In all but one of those cases, the complaint was referred to the Crown Prosecution Service for further consideration. The single exception was in the case of a complaint manifestly unfounded.

The remaining nine complaints were received by me from the Crown Prosecution Service itself.

3 Camrose Street

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Attorney-General why the Treasury Solicitor has failed to reply to correspondence and telephone calls from Messrs Higginbottom and White, solicitors, of Stockport, in connection with the Department of Transport's purchase of 3 Camrose street, SE2.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor replied on 15 December to a letter he had received from Messrs Higginbottom and White dated 6 December. On 19 December a further letter dated 15 December from those solicitors was received by the Treasury Solicitor who is now taking instructions from the Department of Transport to enable him to reply. A telephone call made by Messrs Higginbottom and White to the Treasury Solicitor's Department on 5 December, while the officer concerned with the case was absent on sick leave, was not returned because their letter of 6 December had been received—on 7 December—before the officer was able to return the call.

Patrick Ryan

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Attorney-General whether he now intends to ask the prosecuting authorities in the Republic of Ireland to prosecute Patrick Ryan.

The Attorney-General: I am considering the possible use of the Republic of Ireland's Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976. I am in touch with the Irish Attorney-General about the question of the security of witnesses.

Justices (Appointments)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Attorney-General what is the total number of advisory committees on appointment of justices; and if he will make it his policy to list those that have requested that their names are not revealed.

The Attorney-General: There are 95 advisory committees on justices of the peace in the Lord Chancellor's area of responsibility and 17 in the area of responsibility of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. All advisory committees are to make known their membership by the end of 1992. This follows a decision by both Chancellors announced by the Lord Chancellor on 17 June 1988.

Judges and Judicial Officers

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the numbers of paid judges and judicial officers, including masters, registrars and stipendary magistrates; and if he will indicate *(a)* the total numbers and *(b)* the number of women within each category of appointment or office.

The Attorney-General: The information requested in respect of paid full-time judicial officers is given in the table.

Judicial office	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Lord of Appeal in Ordinary	10	—	10
Lord Justice	26	1	27
High Court Judge	81	1	82
Circuit Judge	391	17	408
County Court Registrar	212	4	216
Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate	41	8	49
Provincial Stipendiary Magistrate	14	—	14
Registrar of Criminal Appeals	1	—	1
Registrar of Civil Appeals	1	—	1
Chancery Master	5	—	5
Master of the Court of Protection	—	1	1
Queen's Bench Master	11	—	11
Admiralty Registrar	1	—	1
Supreme Court Taxing Master	7	—	7
Family Division Registrar	10	2	12
Full-time Chairman of Industrial Tribunals	58	6	64
Social Security Commissioner	15	1	16
Social Security Appeal Tribunal	13	1	14

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Care

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give consideration to the introduction of tax allowances for child care costs.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Tax Rates

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional revenue would be raised by lifting the top rate of tax to 50 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The yield in a full year at 1989-90 levels of income of increasing the higher rate of income tax to 50 per cent. would be about £2¼ billion. The estimate includes the consequential effect on the yield of capital gains tax. It is partly based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and is provisional.

Investment Income

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give total investment income by region for each year from 1979 to 1987 with projections for 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information covers tax units with income above the pay-as-you-earn threshold. It relates to years ended 5 April up to 1987: projections to later years are not made for regions. Only the investment income in the records of tax offices is covered in the table: where liability at basic rate is satisfied at source, the tax office may have no record of the income.

Total investment income

£ million

Region	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	[1]1986-87
North	234	288	332	399	424	358	466	448
Yorkshire and Humberside	455	509	670	686	657	621	745	986
North West	518	722	827	818	817	744	899	1,030
East Midlands	327	429	493	502	487	536	568	723
West Midlands	468	523	652	704	624	588	751	795
East Anglia	255	333	368	343	338	366	518	451
South East	2,510	3,020	3,620	3,760	3,950	3,870	4,270	4,800
South West	751	1,015	990	1,050	1,090	1,020	1,270	1,571
Wales	235	384	388	416	377	411	390	430
Scotland	511	636	712	767	740	821	894	943
Northern Ireland	96	88	109	123	147	157	139	170

[1] Provisional.

Life Offices

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he can make of the gain or loss to the Exchequer if life offices were *(a)* allowed relief of pension business expenses only against pension business profits, *(b)* not allowed to escape taxation by setting up foreign life funds, *(c)* not allowed to create money boxes where surplus funds could be held free of tax, *(d)* to treat profits from stocklending and underwriting commissions as investment income or gains and *(e)* to be subject to special rules to ensure that there would be no manipulation of reassurance transactions in order to gain tax advantages; *(f)* entitled to prompt and regular repayments of all tax credits and tax deducted in respect of their pension business in line with self-administered funds and *(g)* not liable to stamp duty on life policies and reassurance contracts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Options for change to the current tax regime for life assurance were outlined in an Inland Revenue consultative document, "The Taxation of Life Assurance", published on 17 June. These options would address in differing ways the issues mentioned by the hon. Member. The cost or yield from change would depend on the option chosen and its detailed implementation, on the timing of change, and on developments in the life assurance industry.

Assuming however that each change mentioned were made in isolation by amendment to the current rules, the following estimates can be made:

a. on recent experience, an Exchequer yield in the range £100 million to £200 million.

b. relief for foreign life funds does not of itself amount to tax evasion. There are however questions about the scope of relief which should be available and the effectiveness of the current rules;

c. a significant yield, but it cannot be quantified without a more precise specification of the measures proposed and any transitional provisions;

d. the yield would vary significantly depending on the level of market activity, but might be around £10 million a year on recent experience;

e. any yield would depend on what special rules were introduced;

f. no direct gain or loss to the Exchequer. Any change in the timing of payments would however have cash-flow effects, particularly in the year of change;

g. a loss of £85 million in 1988-89, before taking account of any offsetting change in corporation tax payments.

Privatisation

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what amount the Civil Service will contract as a result of the Government's present privatisation programme.

Mr. Brooke: The privatisation programme has concentrated upon nationalised industries, rather than Civil Service activities, but some redistribution of Civil Service staff, previously responsible for monitoring such nationalised industries has taken place. This has often been to meet priority demands such as preparing for further privatisations; and additional civil servants have also been required to staff the new regulatory bodies like Oftel—which covers all telecommunications operators (not only privatised British Telecom)—and Ofgas.

This process can be expected to continue, but decisions on privatising Civil Service activities are taken on their individual merits. There is no predetermined programme against which future manpower reductions can be forecast.

Since 1 April 1979, there has been a net saving of just over 300 posts through the privatisation of Civil Service activities, plus just under 19,000 royal ordnance factories and Ministry of Defence posts hived off in 1985 into Royal Ordnance Factories plc (which was subsequently privatised in 1987).

Taxes (Recovery)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government have signed the recent convention drawn up by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development and the Council of Europe, concerning the recovery of personal and corporate taxes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 20 December.

Building Societies (Ballots)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to require building societies to introduce secret ballots for directors.

Mr. Lilley: No.

Flexible Working Hours

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current limit on flexible working hours in *(a)*

the Department of Trade and Industry, *(b)* social security offices and *(c)* the Department of Health; what it has been each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The current limit on flexible working hours in the non-industrial Civil Service is determined by operational need and is subject to the overriding principle that flexibility should be achieved without adverse effect on the overall efficiency of Departments or on service to the public. All non-industrial civil servants are required to complete their conditioned hours within specified periods. Questions about the operation of specific flexible working hours schemes within Departments should be addressed to the appropriate Minister.

Bills (Reprinting)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of public Bills which were reprinted in each Session since 1983; what was the reason for reprinting each Bill; and what was the cost of reprinting each Bill.

Mr. Lilley: For the information requested on the Bills reprinted during the 1987-88 Session, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 27 October at columns *369-70*. The reasons for reprinting Bills during earlier Sessions are no longer recorded, but a list of such reprinted Bills since 1983 is given in the table.

1983-84 Session

(House of Commons Bill No)
- 14 Video Recordings
- 15 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Amendment)
- 16 Social Security (Age of Retirement)
- 43 Trade Unions (Amendment)
- 44 Police and Criminal Evidence
- 51 Data Protection
- 61 Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland)
- 78 Ordnance Factories and Military Services
- 147 Housing Defects
- 168 Registered Homes
- 187 Road Traffic Regulations
- 201 Capital Transfer Tax

(House of Lords Bill No.)
- 2 Data Protection
- 53 Agricultural Holdings
- 58 Matrimonial and Family Proceedings
- 76 Straw and Stubble Burning
- 100 Housing and Building Control
- 178 Video Recordings
- 211 Health and Social Security
- 283 Police and Criminal Evidence

1984-85 Session

(House of Commons Bill No.)
- 1 Elections (Northern Ireland)
- 11 Local Government
- 12 Representation of the People
- 21 Local Government (Access to Information)
- 54 Films
- 68 Transport
- 79 Food and Environment Protection
- 105 Unborn Children (Protection)

(House of Lords Bill No.)
- 8 Food and Environment Protection
- 18 Prosecution of Offences
- 79 Films
- 123 Local Government
- 124 Further Education
- 144 Social Security

1985-86

(House of Commons Bill No.)
- 2 Agriculture
- 4 Local Government
- 9 Dockyard Services
- 10 Housing (Scotland)
- 13 Gas
- 19 Building Societies
- 21 Obscene Publications (Protection of Children etc) (Amendment)
- 28 Unborn Children (Protection)
- 40 Public Order
- 51 Financial Services
- 63 Housing and Planning
- 75 Animals (Scientific Procedures)
- 78 Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation)
- 105 Obscene Publications (Protection of Children etc) (Amendment)
- 119 National Health Service (Amendment)
- 126 European Communities (Amendment)
- 137 Channel Tunnel
- 151 Sex Discrimination
- 155 Patents, Designs and Marks
- 158 Education (No. 2)
- 161 Latent Damage
- 168 Education
- 177 Rate Support Grants
- 192 Welsh Language
- 198 Company Directors Disqualification
- 203 Education
- 215 Shops (No. 3)
- 222 Financial Services
- 224 Housing and Planning

(House of Lords Bill No.)
- 12 Shops
- 28 Agricultural Holdings
- 38 Salmon
- 52 Patents, Designs and Marks
- 58 Local Government
- 72 Sex Discrimination
- 87 Education
- 92 Housing (Multiple Occupation)
- 98 Housing (Scotland)
- 99 Latent Damage
- 111 Gas
- 121 Airports
- 130 Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Represention)
- 133 Agriculture
- 145 Housing and Planning
- 146 Public Order
- 158 Company Directors Disqualification
- 163 Wages
- 181 National Health Service (Amendment)
- 196 Financial Services
- 223 European Communities (Amendment)
- 238 Financial Services
- 245 Housing and Planning
- 246 Financial Services
- 250 Housing and Planning

1986-87 Session

(House of Commons Bill No.)
- 3 Coal Industry
- 6 Norfolk and Suffolk Broads
- 8 Channel Tunnel
- 9 Abolition of Domestic Rates etc (Scotland)
- 10 Teachers' Pay and Conditions
- 11 Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions)
- 18 Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces)
- 20 Access fo Personal Files
- 23 Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupations)
- 25 Obscene Publications
- 26 Education (Nutritional Requirements)
- 34 School Governors (Access to Information)
- 36 Parliamentary and Health Service Commissioners
- 41 Local Government Finance
- 53 Rate Support Grants
- 79 Local Government
- 90 Parliamentary and Other Pensions
- 97 Immigration (Carriers' Liability)
- 98 Landlord and Tenant (No. 2)
- 103 Pilotage

113 Motor Cycle Noise
116 Consolidated Fund (Appropriation)
119 Consumer Protection
120 Planning Permission (Demolition of Houses)

(House of Lords Bill No.)
2 Pilotage
3 Licensing (Restaurant Meals)
6 Consumer Protection
9 Ministry of Defence Police
10 Broadcasting
12 Reverter of Sites
13 Recognition of Trusts
14 Minors' Contracts
15 Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment)
21 Animals (Scotland)
24 Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport
30 Infant Life (Preservation)
32 Teachers' Pay and Conditions
34 Patents (Amendment)
58 Local Government Finance
76 Banking
88 Abolition of Domestic Rates etc (Scotland)
116 Criminal Justice

The cost of reprinting is borne by HMSO and should be covered by income from sales.

National Audit Office

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the seven accounts whose audit has been contracted out by the National Audit Office; to whom those accounts have been contracted out; and what fees are to be paid.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This matter is the responsibility of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Official Report (Delivery)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of delivering volume 129 of the green-bound *Official Report* to hon. Members' homes *(a)* by Securicor delivery and *(b)* through the Royal Mail.

Mr. Lilley: The rates negotiated by HMSO with Securicor are commercially sensitive but show an appreciable saving over Royal Mail for dispatches such as bound volumes of the *Official Report*.

Inland Revenue (Reply Envelopes)

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Inland Revenue's policy of withdrawing pre-paid reply envelopes for use by taxpayers; and if he will give the estimated savings to the Exchequer arising from the decision.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 29 January 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) at column *420*.

Tax Thresholds

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Treasury in a full financial year if tax thresholds were raised in 1989-90 by *(a)* the rate of inflation, *(b)* twice the rate of inflation and *(c)* three times the rate of inflation.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Direct revenue costs of increasing income tax allowances, the basic rate limit, and the capital gains tax annual exempt amount in accordance with statutory indexation provisions and by multiples of those amounts are in the table. Estimates are mainly based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Direct revenue costs of increasing 1988-89 income and capital gains tax thresholds at 1989-90 levels of income and gains

	£ million
Amounts due under indexation	1,750
Twice amounts due under indexation	3,400
Three times amounts due under indexation	5,000

The cost in a full year of increasing the inheritance tax threshold by the same amounts would be *(a)* £80 million, *(b)* £150 million and *(c)* £210 million.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much it would cost to restrict *(a)* personal tax allowances, *(b)* age allowance, *(c)* mortgage interest tax relief and *(d)* tax relief for occupational and private pensions to the basic rate of tax in (i) 1988-89 and (ii) 1989-90, assuming tax allowances are indexed according to the statutory formula.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* Estimates of the effect on tax liabilities in each case if relief were allowed only at the basic rate of income tax are given in the table. No allowance has been made for possible behavioural effects if allowances and reliefs were restricted to the basic rate.

The estimates are based on projections of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Direct revenue cost of allowances and reliefs in excess of the basic rate, 1988-89 and 1989-90

£ million

	Cost in 1988-89[1]	*Cost in 1989-90*[1]
Personal allowance	710	810
Age allowance[2]	—	—
Mortgage interest	330	[3] ..
Retirement annuity premiums	80	85
Employee's superannuation contributions	160	180

[1] Estimates for different reliefs are not additive; combined costs would be greater than the sum of the separate components due to the cumulative affect of keeping people out of higher rate tax.
[2] Taxpayers liable to higher rate income tax do not qualify for age allowance. The allowance is withdrawn at the rate of £2 of allowance for every additional £3 of income above the aged income limit (£10,600 for 1988-89, £11,300 for 1989-90).
[3] It would be premature to provide an estimate for 1989-90, since the cost will depend on the amounts of mortgage lending and level of interest rates, as well as on 1989-90 income tax rates and bands.

Mortgage Repayments

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the global increase in mortgage repayments both net and gross since *(a)* January 1988 and *(b)* May 1988.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* I regret that the information is not available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parole

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average delay in processing parole applications; how many prisoners who were granted parole had their release on parole delayed by the time taken to process their applications in 1987; and by how much the prison population would be reduced if such delays were eliminated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available in the exact form requested. In 1987, in about one third of first parole reviews, no decision was reached by a target date designed to allow release on the parole eligibility date. The average delay in these cases was three weeks. Assuming similar delays for subsequent reviews, had all these delays not occurred, the estimated aggregate effect would have been equivalent to a reduction in the average annual prison population of about 400.

Positive Vetting

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total personnel salary cost of staff involved in positive vetting procedures for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hurd: It is not our practice to disclose information of this nature relating to security procedures.

Prisoners (Mental Health)

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were mentally ill on the most recent convenient date; and what breakdown of these figures by ethnic grouping is available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 March 1988, the most recent date for which information is available, there were 235 inmates held in prison establishments, who, in the opinion of prison medical officers, were suffering from mental disorder of a nature or degree which would satisfy the criteria in the Mental Health Act 1983 for detention in hospital for medical treatment. One hundred and ninety seven of these inmates were mentally ill. There is no available record of the ethnic origin of these prisoners.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of recorded uses of firearms by police in England and Wales in 1979 and in the latest year available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following table shows the recorded number of uses of firearms by the police for incidents involving criminals or other persons known or believed to be armed.

Year	*Number incidents in which shots were fired by police*	*Number of operations in which firearms were issued to the police*
1979	3	8,108
1980	10	7,275
1981	4	6,149
1982	10	7,952
1983[1]	3	3,180
1984	6	2,667
1985	7	2,488
1986	1	2,453
1987	7	2,185

[1] The basis on which the figures are recorded changed in 1983. From 1983 the figures recorded the number of operations in which firearms were issued; the figures for 1982 and earlier years record the number of occasions on which firearms were issued.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total crime clear-up rate for England and Wales broken down by police authority area, in 1979 and the latest year available.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1987 is given in table 2.18 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1987", column 498, where figures are published annually. Figures for 1979 are given in the table.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police: [1]clear-up rate by police force area

England and Wales	*Percentages*
Police force area	*1979*
Avon and Somerset	43
Bedfordshire	48
Cambridgeshire	47
Cheshire	58
Cleveland	51
Cumbria	56
Derbyshire	50
Devon and Cornwall	46
Dorset	47
Durham	52
Essex	42
Gloucestershire	51
Greater Manchester	46
Hampshire	46
Hertfordshire	54
Humberside	45
Kent	50
Lancashire	56
Leicestershire	54
Lincolnshire	60
London, City of	21
Merseyside	43
Metropolitan Police District	21
Norfolk	47
Northamptonshire	48
Northumbria	53
North Yorkshire	51
Nottinghamshire	51
South Yorkshire	51
Staffordshire	51
Suffolk	57
Surrey	47
Sussex	53
Thames Valley	50
Warwickshire	46
West Mercia	49
West Midlands	37
West Yorkshire	37
Wiltshire	42
Dyfed-Powys	63
Gwent	60
North Wales	59
South Wales	46
England and Wales	41

[1] Cleared up by an offender admitting the offence; being charged or cautioned, or no proceedings being taken against known offender.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what was *(a)* the total number of recorded crimes and *(b)* the total number of crimes committed against the person in 1979 and the latest year available.

Mr. John Patten: The information for calendar years is published in table 2.1 of "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, 1987", column 498, and for the 12 months to the end of September 1988 in table 4 of Home Office statistical bulletin 36/88.

Coach Traffic (Central London)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the consultation document prepared by the Metropolitan police traffic strategy seminar in April, particularly insofar as it relates to the effect of coach traffic in creating congestion in central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the Metropolitan police have now received responses to the consultation document which was prepared after the traffic strategy seminar held last April. These will be used to develop a traffic strategy covering, among other things, coach traffic, which will form part of the overall force strategy.

Race Horses (Drugs)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the use of drugs to enhance race horse performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Action to prevent or detect the misuse of drugs for racehorses is a matter for the Jockey Club, who also have their own procedures for disciplining those who breach their rules of racing. In appropriate circumstances there might be a charge of conspiracy to defraud. The Law Commission, in its working paper number 104, has asked for views on whether gambling swindles involving drugs on animals should be covered by statutory offences. My right hon. Friend will consider its advice in due course.

Firearms

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the dates of implementation of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to publish the draft firearms regulations made under the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On the implementation of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 20 December 1988. Revision of the firearms rules will be necessary in respect of some of the provisions to be brought into force by the second commencement order, later next year. The new rules will come into effect at the same time. Draft guidance to the police on firearms legislation has recently been circulated to a wide range of interested bodies for their comments.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 December to the hon. Member for Stockport, *Official Report*, column *753*, if he will make a statement indicating the basis upon which he is assessing the success of his initiative to reduce the time spent on remand in custody of those remanded from courts in *(a)* Avon, *(b)* Somerset, *(c)* Kent and *(d)* the west midlands; and as to how he is assessing how the results from each of those areas compare with the rest of England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: After the introduction of statutory custody time limits in these four areas in April 1987, we monitored the level of compliance with the limits. In the first six months, over 95 per cent. of cases were within their limits. Custody limits were extended to a large part of England and all of Wales in April this year and the preliminary results in those areas are similar. Comparable information is not available for areas where time limits are not yet in force.

Prisons

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of people held in prison in England and Wales, both on remand and those serving a sentence, in 1979 and in the latest year available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Average population figures for each of the last 11 years are published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library. Populations for 1987 will appear in table 1.5 of the latest report (Cm. 547) due to be published 22 December.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when construction of the new psychiatric wing at Holloway prison is planned to begin.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No date for the start of construction work has been fixed.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners do not currently have access to night sanitation; and what is his estimate of what the number will be in the year 2000.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All accommodation at new prisons has access to night sanitation. At existing establishments the number of places now without access to night sanitation is in excess of 20,000 out of a total of about 42,000. It is anticipated that by 1995 75 per cent. of all prison places will have access to sanitation, compared with 43 per cent. in 1979, and that by the end of 1999 the number of places lacking night sanitation will be in the region of 14,000. Trial schemes which might accelerate the introduction of integral sanitation are being evaluated.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are accommodated *(a)* two to a cell and *(b)* three to a cell in prison accommodation designed for single occupancy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 13 November, the latest date for which information is available, 12,210 inmates of prison establishments in England and Wales were held two to a cell and 4,893 were held three to a cell, in cells designed for single occupancy.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of prisoners who will spend Christmas and new year in police cells; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The number of prisoners in police cells has been in steep decline since the suspension of local industrial action by the POA in October. On 4 October there were 1,917 such prisoners. Yesterday there were 349. By the Christmas weekend, numbers should have fallen still further and we are aiming to achieve a reduction to around 100 by the new year. This reflects a major effort by all concerned and is largely due to the delivery on target of the substantial extra number of prison places which I announced in March.

Asbestos (Gas Masks)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if all the gas masks issued during the 1939-45 war which contained asbestos have been collected and destroyed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Wartime equipment, including gas masks, issued to the public was recalled in 1945. The number of gas masks remaining in private hands is not known but advice has been given from time to time that, because of the potential health hazard from asbestos in the filters, anyone still in possession of a wartime gas mask should contact his local environmental health officer for advice on its safe disposal.

Mr. W. G. Steele

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his decision not to review the case of Mr. W. G. Steele.

Mr. John Patten: The case has been reviewed on more than one occasion. Neither my right hon. Friend nor his predecessors have found grounds in the representations made to justify referring the case to the Court of Appeal. My right hon. Friend remains ready to reconsider the case, but only if new evidence or other new matters directly pertinent to the conviction are raised with him.

London Underground (Policing)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are any plans for the Metropolitan police to assume responsibility for the policing of the London Underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has agreed to consider how best he could provide Metropolitan police officers to help with the policing of the London Underground while British Transport police recruit and train additional officers to bring London Underground division up from its present strength of 329 to its new complement of 400. Metropolitan police officers will also continue to provide assistance to British Transport police officers on the London Underground when required, but there are at present no plans for the Metropolitan police to assume responsibility for policing the Underground.

Fire Safety

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the guide to means of escape and related fire safety measures in certain existing houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Hurd: Together with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales, I have today published the guide. It is intended to provide a national advisory standard for means of escape and also contains recommendations on various related fire safety measures, including fire warning systems, fire fighting equipment and fire drills. The guide is designed to aid the process of consultation between housing and fire authorities required by housing legislation and to provide a source of reference for the owners, managers and occupiers of houses in multiple occupation.

I have placed a copy in the Library. It is being issued to fire and local authorities and copies can also be obtained from any of our departments.

Prisons (Needles and Syringes)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many needles or syringes contrary to prison rules have been found in prison establishments in England and Wales during the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Finds of the following numbers of items were reported:

	Needles	*Syringes*
1985	26	28
1986	27	41
1987	10	34
[1]1988	16	36

[1] Up to 30 June.

Some of the finds of needles and syringes were associated.

Sexual Abuse (Children)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been prosecuted for offences involving child pornography, child prostitution or child sexual abuse, respectively, for each of the last five years for which records are available; and how many of those cases involve children who had been reported as missing.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The available information is given in the table. It is not possible from the information held centrally to identify those prosecutions involving children who had been reported as missing.

Persons prosecuted for offences involving child pornography, child prostitution or child sexual abuse

England and Wales *Number*

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Child pornography[1]					
Male	12	18	22	10	22
Female	—	—	—	—	1
Child prostitution[2]					
Male	—	—	—	1	2
Female	1	3	—	—	2
Child sexual abuse[3]					
Male	3,200	3,129	3,320	3,162	3,723
Female	29	35	45	49	52

[1] Protection of Children Act 1978 sections 1.6—taking indecent photographs of children.

[2] Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 28—persons responsible for girl under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution.

[3] Includes only those sexual offences where the victim is known to be aged under 16 ie.: buggery or attempted buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal, indecent assault on a male or female person aged under 16, unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16, incest with girl under 13, householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 16, abduction of unmarried girl under 16 and gross indecency with children. Excludes sexual offences where the age is not separately available, eg: rape.

ENVIRONMENT

Atmospheric Pollution

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total annual budget which is specifically allocated by his Department for the investigation of effects on the environment of atmospheric pollution;

(2) what is the annual budget allocated by his Department for the study of the greenhouse effect and the potential implications for the United Kingdom of this phenomenon.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For 1988-89, the Department allocated £191,000 for research on global pollution questions, including the greenhouse effect, and £1.442 million for air pollution effects research. For 1989-90, the planned expenditure on climate change research is £590,000.

Football Clubs (Membership Schemes)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has, in the light of his intention to introduce a national identity card scheme for football clubs, of the operation of the scheme run by Luton Town football club; and if he has any details of the club's record and attendances for the period since the introduction of the scheme and for the five years prior to that.

Mr. Moynihan: I am fully aware of the details of Luton's membership scheme and the success it has had in combating football hooliganism. Since the scheme was introduced on 16 August 1986 there has been only one arrest, for a drugs offence, at the club's home football league matches. Attendances and record for league matches are:

Season	*Average home attendance*	*League position*
1981-82	11,900	1st Division 2
1982-83	13,500	18th Division 1
1983-84	11,900	16th Division 1
1984-85	10,800	13th Division 1
1985-86	11,100	9th Division 1
1986-87	10,300	7th Division 1
1987-88	8,038	9th Division 1 Winners Littlewoods Cup
1988-89[1]	9,692	

[1] 3 September to 3 December.

I am informed that the members who joined the membership scheme since its introduction have been as follows:

	Number
1986-87	22,000
1987-88	18,000
1988-89	19,000

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives from the Football Supporters Association and the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs; who was in attendance and in what capacity; what was discussed; and if he will amend his plans to impose compulsory identity cards on all football supporters as a result of his discussions.

Mr. Moynihan: I met representatives of the FSA and the NFFSC, for the second time this year, on 6 December. Three hon. Friends with close links with football clubs attended the meeting—my hon. Friends, the members for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). I had also invited two hon. Members from the Labour party who were unfortunately unable to attend. We discussed the implications of a national membership scheme for football supporters and I said that I would take account of the comments of both bodies in considering the scheme when it is submitted.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those organisations which have made representations *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the proposed national football membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received some 950 representations about the principle of a scheme, most of them against. I will write to the hon. Member listing the organisations concerned. It would be for the proposed football membership authority to draw up a scheme and submit it to my right hon. Friend for approval.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received against the proposed football membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* None—since the proposed football national membership

scheme has neither been drafted by the football membership authority nor presented to the Secretary of State for his approval. However I have received some 950 representations on a wide range of issues relating to the idea of a scheme, most of them against.

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 15 December at columns 1080-82.

European Football

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the cost to English football clubs of being excluded from European competitions.

Mr. Moynihan: None. Only the football authorities and the clubs could make such an estimate.

Football Clubs (Facilities)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the cost to English football clubs of upgrading their facilities in line with statutory requirements over the past three years.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that the football grounds improvement trust has provided £8·8 million to football league clubs over the past three years to assist them in meeting the requirements of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975. The trust funds 75 per cent. of the cost of eligible ground safety schemes. There is no information held centrally on the actual expenditure by clubs on these schemes.

EC (Animals and Plants)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his statutory advisers have provided the European Commission with lists of threatened animals and plants in the European Economic Community within the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In January 1988 our statutory advisers, the Nature Conservancy Council, accepted a contract from the European Commission to provide lists of threatened animal and plant species in the European Community. The information was submitted to the Commission in March this year.

Pollution Control

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in the last year for which figures are available, were proceedings taken against contractors and developers under sections 3 and 16 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1986, proceedings were taken in England and Wales in 130 cases under section 3 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, and in eight cases under section 16. Details for separate categories of defendants are not available.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will review the enforcement powers available to local authorities under current planning and pollution control legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have appointed Robert Carnwath QC to review local authorities' planning enforcement powers. His report is expected in the new year. An announcement will be made shortly afterwards. We have also announced proposals which should make local authorities' enforcement powers more effective in relation to air pollution and waste disposal.

Council Housing (Torbay)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will authorise the transfer of Torbay borough council's housing assets to a housing association in accordance with the council's recommendations.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend is currently considering Torbay borough council's request for consent to the sale of its housing to two housing associations. We shall announce our conclusion as soon as possible.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when tenants in proposed housing action trust areas will be balloted.

Mr. Trippier: When we have had an opportunity to consider the findings of the consultants studying the proposed housing action trust areas, the Secretary of State will decide next steps.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the repairs which will be undertaken in housing action trust areas.

Mr. Trippier: Housing action trusts will draw up their proposals for each area in consultation with local residents.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made any estimate of how long it will take to establish housing action trusts; and how long they will stay in existence.

Mr. Trippier: Under the Housing Act 1988, housing action trusts can be established only after a ballot of tenants has been held in each area and after both Houses of Parliament have approved the necessary orders. The length of time each trust remains in existence will depend on the programme of works it decides to carry out in consultation with local residents and the speed with which this can be completed. The trusts will be under a statutory duty to use their best endeavours to achieve their objects as soon as practicable.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the date of publication of the three consultants' reports on housing action trusts.

Mr. Trippier: We have not yet received all the reports from the consultants studying the six areas proposed for housing action trusts.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was his Department's total expenditure on housing in 1979 and in the latest year available, at constant prices.

Mr. Trippier: Total gross capital public expenditure on housing in England in 1987-88 was £3,827 million; in 1979-80 it was £5,545 million (at 1987-88 prices). Current expenditure in 1987-88 was £1,333 million; in 1979-80 it was £3,217 million (at 1987-88 prices).

Housing Starts

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public housing starts were made in 1979 and in the latest year available.

Mr. Trippier: Numbers of public sector housing starts in 1979 and 1987 appear in table 6.1 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1977-1987", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he proposes to give Bournemouth local authority on how to fulfil its statutory obligation to provide accommodation for the homeless, now that it has transferred all its housing stock to the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: Bournemouth has not transferred its housing stock. If the city council wished to do so, it would need to consult its tenants first (in accordance with schedule 3A to the Housing Act 1985) and then seek my right hon. Friend's consent. He would have to be satisfied that adequate arrangements had been made to meet Bournemouth's continuing statutory duties towards the homeless.

Food Poisoning

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources are made available by his Department for the investigation of food poisoning.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pays block grant to local authorities through the rate support grant system. Grant is paid on the basis of authorities' expenditure needs. In assessing needs he takes into account environmental health duties. Block grant is an unhypothecated grant and it is for individual authorities to decide how they can best meet the needs of their area.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what proportion of each local authority's resources are made available for the investigation of food poisoning.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for each local authority to determine: the information is not held by the Department.

Local Authority Expenditure

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he takes of the number of high-risk food premises within a local authority area when determining local authority expenditure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Is assessing local authorities' expenditure needs my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes into account environmental health duties. This is determined by a number of factors including the total floor spaces of shops and restaurants in an authority's area.

Housing Association Grant (Liverpool)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from organisations on Merseyside about the level of grant available to housing associations in the region; and what his response has been.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations from housing associations and others with an interest in the provision of rental housing on Merseyside. These have been taken into account in the decision on housing association grant levels for 1989-90, which I announced in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) on 14 December.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made on consultations with the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association on the permitted days' use of land for clay pigeon shooting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: A consultation paper was issued on 16 December. A copy of the paper together with a full list of the consultees have been placed in the Library of the House. The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association has been included among those consulted, and its response is awaited.

Mink

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether planning permission is necessary before the erection of mink farms and before the issuing of licences under the Mink Keeping Order 1987.

Mr. Chope: Since the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 came into force on 5 December planning permission has been necessary for the erection of new livestock units, including mink farms, within 400m of most residential and other buildings. Applications for planning permission should be made to local planning authorities. The issuing and renewal of licences needed under the Mink Keeping Order 1987 is a separate matter, for which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office Agriculture Department are responsible.

Crown Suppliers

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why progress in selling the Crown Suppliers to the private sector has been slow;

(2) how many officials are engaged *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in his Department's programme to sell the Crown Suppliers to the private sector;

(3) what is the estimated date of completion of the sale of the Crown Suppliers to the private sector.

Mr. Chope: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Croxteth Hall and Country Park

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of Croxteth hall and country park, Merseyside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have considered very carefully proposals by the Merseyside residuary body for the detailed arrangements for the future of Croxteth hall and country park. To put an end to uncertainty over the future of Croxteth park we are minded to accept the recommendation that Croxteth should transfer to Liverpool city council on 1 April 1989. The transfer would include an endowment from the residuary body of £3 million to be held in a new Croxteth hall and country park trust fund currently being set up by Liverpool city council. The endowment would be applied to capital works for improving and developing the estate.

Subject to the outcome of consultations with the local district councils and interested parties, including local amenity organisations, an order would be made under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985 giving effect to these proposals.

Air Pollution (Report)

Mr. Robert B. Jones: to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government intend to respond to the Environment Committee's report on air pollution.

Mr. Ridley: We have today published our response to the Environment Committee's report on air pollution. The Committee's report appeared at a timely moment and addressed a number of issues on which policy has been developing quickly. In our response we broadly welcome the Committee's report; respond to its detailed recommendations; and outline a number of significant developments since the report was published.

Atmospheric Pollution

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has allocated any resources and support personnel to the international geosphere-biosphere programme in its current evaluation of the greenhouse problem and prospective solutions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Funding of international non-governmental sciences is a matter for the Royal Society and the research councils and is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. This Department is currently reviewing its own support of climate change research and will take a close interest in the progress of the IGBP.

Radon Radiation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by location the number of public sector buildings in Great Britain affected by radon radiation; and what is their action level reading.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The information is not recorded in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rating Reform

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has issued guide lines as to how the needs element in the Government grant system is to be applied to local government following the introduction of the poll tax for *(a)* district councils and *(b)* parish councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. No such guidelines have been issued in respect of the needs grant. Under sections 76(1) and 78(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the needs grant in England will be paid to the collection fund from which both district councils and parishes will draw their income. There will be a single needs assessment encompassing both district and parish functions. The Department is consulting the local authority associations about the basis of distributing needs grant and the papers are in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies have been printed of the pamphlet "You and the Community Charge", and what has been the cost to his Department of producing the pamphlet.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* A total of 100,000 copies have been produced initially, at a cost of approximately £21,500. More will be printed if demand warrants it.

ENERGY

Electricity (Scotland)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether it is his intention that the South of Scotland Electricity Company will be enabled to supply electricity to domestic consumers in England within or beyond the area of England now served by the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes.

Power Station (Druridge Bay)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy why Factsheet No. 11, issued by his Department, listed as an asset to be transferred to National Power a power station at Druridge bay in Northumberland for which planning permission has not yet been applied for.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The allocation of the CEGB's assets between National Power and PowerGen includes sites for future possible power stations as well as producing stations.

Nuclear Materials (Safeguards)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has concerning safeguards research at *(a)* Euratom and *(b)* the International Atomic Energy Agency into the safeguarding of inertial confinement fusion technology.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am not aware that any such research is being carried on.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the definition used by his Department, of the phrase "subject to safeguards", used in relation to nuclear materials.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Nuclear materials in the United Kingdom which are subject to safeguards are reported to the safeguards authorities with regard to stocks and movements. Such nuclear materials are verified by Euratom, in accordance with chapter 7 of the Euratom treaty. In addition the IAEA may, under the terms of the UK/Euratom/IAEA agreement, choose to designate for inspection a facility containing nuclear material. The IAEA also inspects some nuclear material in the United Kingdom under earlier bilateral safeguards agreements.

Renewable Energies and Windpower

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department intends to investigate the work of P. C. Fuhri-Snethlage, on renewable energies and windpower, as described in evidence of 30 November at the Hinkley Point C inquiry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are supporting a major programme of research and development on the renewable energy sources in order to stimulate their full exploitation where they are both economic and environmentally acceptable. The programme covers wind, tidal, geothermal, small hydro, wave, solar and biofuels. Within the wind programme, particular attention is paid to large wind turbines and a 3MW machine is being tested on Orkney.

Piper Alpha Incident

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made with his Department's technical investigation into the Piper Alpha accident.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department's director of safety, Mr. James Petrie, has now produced a further report on the work done following his interim report which was published at the end of September. With the agreement of Lord Cullen, who will be conducting the public inquiry into the accident, I am today placing a copy of this further report in the Library of the House and am making copies widely available.

As further investigatory work is to be undertaken by the public inquiry, Mr. Petrie has requested that he be released from further investigation of the accident under the remit given by the Secretary of State and the Health and Safety Commission. My right hon. Friend has agreed with the commission that it should accept this request.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmonella

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence his Department has of vertical infection of hens' eggs by salmonella; what species are involved; and what is his estimate of the numbers of chickens involved.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Evidence has existed for a number of years of the ability of salmonella enteritidis to infect the ovaries of poultry and was noted by Snoeyenbos, Smyser and Van Rockel in the "Avian Diseases 13" in 1969. More recently articles have appeared in the *Veterinary Record*, on 24 September, which established a link between this infection in the laying bird and in the egg.

Salmonella enteritidis has been detected in laying hens, broilers and breeders and is also known in ducks.

Since salmonella does not provide an overt clinical disease in adult poultry, it is not possible to give precise figures of the extent of the infection without extensive testing, which, in the absence of a simple, rapid and sensitive test for salmonella enteritidis, is not possible.

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the incidence of salmonella enteritidis in commercial laying flocks.

Mr. MacGregor: Under the Zoonoses Order 1975, any person isolating salmonella organisms from poultry must notify my Department. So far this year, my Department has received 15 such reports of salmonella enteritidis isolations from commercial laying flocks. There are in total about 42,000 laying flocks in the United Kingdom. Each such reported isolation of salmonella enteritidis is thoroughly investigated by a veterinary surgeon of the veterinary investigation service.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many eggs have been imported in each of the last three years; what steps his Department has taken to protect the public against the importation of eggs contaminated by salmonella; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The figures for imports of shell eggs in the last three years are:

	(Million eggs)
1985	464
1986	338
1987	190

There is a very low degree of risk of contracting salmonella poisoning from imported, or home-produced, eggs particularly if everyone follows the advice of the chief medical officer.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the factors accounting for the different experience of salmonella incidence in the poultry industry in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are aware that the salmonella problem is not confined to Great Britain alone. My officials are in contact with colleagues in Northern Ireland about the salmonella issues. To date there has not been a comparative assessment made of the situations both here and in Northern Ireland.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps has he taken to prevent salmonella from chickens which have been destroyed from getting into the food chain.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Various methods of disposal are available, including incineration and burial, neither of which should present any risk of salmonella being

introduced into the food chain. In any case there are legal controls to ensure that salmonella is destroyed in the processing of animal protein.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidance he has issued to local authorities about salmonella enteriditis in poultry products; if he will place copies of such guidance in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Guidance was issued to enforcement authorities on 17 August on the identification and rejection of birds showing visible signs of salmonella enteriditis at post-mortem inspection. A copy is being placed in the Library of the House.

Beef

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of South American thin skirt will be imported into *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Northern Ireland, as a result of a decision by the European Community beef management committee; and what representations he has received from the meat processing industry in Northern Ireland about the effect of this importation on their market.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No licences have yet been issued for the import of thin skirt under the quota. However, we understand that in view of the extent to which the quota has been oversubscribed, the quantity for which licences will be issued in the United Kingdom is likely to be less than 300 tonnes. Such representation which my Department has had from meat processors generally welcome the opening of this quota in order to re-establish trade disrupted by the Community's adoption of the harmonised system of tariff.

Eggs

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the compensation scheme for egg producers announced on 19 December will be extended to manufacturers of poultry farm equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The schemes I announced on 19 December are designed to reduce the surplus of eggs on the market by encouraging the destruction of unwanted eggs and the culling of about 10 per cent. of the laying flock. Manufacturers of poultry farm equipment will not qualify for payment under these schemes.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of eggs sold in shops and supermarkets is produced by large-scale egg producers; and what proportion of the total number of egg producers in the United Kingdom his Department classifies as large-scale producers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department does not classify egg producers according to size. Information on the proportion of eggs produced by holding size for sale in the United Kingdom is not available.

At the June 1987 agricultural census the distribution of holdings in the United Kingdom by size of laying flock was as follows:

Size of laying flock (fowls)	*Number of holdings with laying fowls*	*Per cent.*	*Number of fowls thousands*	*Per cent.*
Under 1,000	39,574	94·56	1,442	3·8
1,000-less than 20,000	1,907	4,56	10,547	27·6
20,000-less than 50,000	225	0·54	6,854	17·9
50,000 and over	144	0·34	19,386	50·7
Total	41,850	100	38,229	100

Half the fowls were on holdings with flocks of 50,000 fowls or more.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the compensation to egg producers announced on 19 December will go to small-scale egg producers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Payments under the Egg Industry (England and Wales) Scheme, and under the similar schemes for Scotland and Northern Ireland, will be made to egg packers for the destruction of surplus eggs. All egg producers, whether large or small, should benefit from the removal of surplus eggs from the market.

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has considered the introduction of a scheme for the slaughter of laying flocks or the destruction of eggs found to contain salmonella; and if he will give figures for the number of flocks so infected.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 19 December 1988 at column 21.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the sampling of eggs to detect traces of salmonella, the producers of those eggs found to contain salmonella, and producers whose farms fail to comply with health regulations, will receive Government compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* There are no plans to pay Government compensation to those commercial egg producers in cases where salmonella organisms have been isolated or who are unable to comply with the recently introduced code of practice. However free advice will be available from the state veterinary service in support of that given by their own veterinary surgeon to assist those producers in minimising the risks of salmonella infection and complying with the code.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the cost of the testing of eggs for traces of salmonella will be borne by the egg producing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 21 December 1988]*: The recently issued code of practice applicable to commercial laying flocks sets out that the cost of bacteriological monitoring of laying flocks incluing the testing of eggs for the presence of salmonella will be borne by the poultry industry.

Nigeria (Development Aid)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the results of meetings held in Abuja, Nigeria during November by the Parliamentary Secretary, the Baroness Trumpington, with members of the Federal Government of Nigeria in respect of financial aid for development.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The main purpose of my noble Friend's visit to Nigeria in November was to open an agricultural seminar, but while in Lagos she took the opportunity on behalf of the Government to announce a three-year agricultural education project involving links between British and Nigerian agricultural colleages, a conservation and rural development programme at Oban Hills in Cross River state, and the provision of consultants for a study of the Nigerian sugar industry. She mentioned existing projects, including emergency aid for controls against grasshopper pests, funding for the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan and the current World Bank study of agricultural potential on the Mambilla plateau. She said that the British Government would consider other Nigerian requests for further aid to the agricultural sector under the technical co-operation programme. Subsequent action, of course, falls to my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

Animal Feed

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is giving consideration to requiring animal feed suppliers to inform purchasers of the contents of their product.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Feedingtuffs Regulations 1988 already require suppliers of animal feeds to provide detailed information about the content of their products. In addition, the new codes of practice for the control of salmonella recommend poultry farmers to obtain assurance from suppliers that feeds are free from salmonella.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to improve the monitoring of the content of feed produced by large egg producers for their own livestock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Yes. Guidelines for the production of final feeds for livestock are now being issued. They provide advice on the monitoring and manufacture of both raw materials and feedingstuffs. A detailed code of practice is being drawn up.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the National Farmers Union representatives who attended the post-Chernobyl briefing on north Wales held at his Department on Friday 9 December.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Representation of the National Farmers Union at any particular meeting is a matter for the union.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the Country Landowners Association representatives who attended the post-Chernobyl briefing on north Wales held at his Department on Friday 9 December.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Representation of the Country Landowners Association at any particular meeting is a matter for the association.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the names of the representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales who attended the briefing meeting in London on Friday 9 December to discuss the continuing effects of Chernobyl.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales attended this meeting, which was devoted largely to the situation as it affects Cumbria. The Welsh Office Agriculture Department will be inviting the FUW, amongst other interested organisations, to a meeting to deal specifically with the situation in north Wales in the new year.

Parrots

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the issue of licences for the importation of parrots and parrot-like birds and the number of licences granted during each month in 1988 to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under the Importation of Birds Poultry and Hatching Eggs Order 1979, my Ministry issues licences for the importation of parrots and parrot-like birds, subject to conditions designed to safeguard this country against the introduction of animal diseases such as Newcastle disease. These conditions include a requirement for a period of post-import quarantine.

The number of licences issued during 1988 is:

	Number
January	121
February	91
March	85
April	75
May	97
June	118
July	109
August	92
September	77
October	104
November	96
December[1]	43
Total	1,108

[1] Up to 20th.

Aquatic Environment

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) pursuant to his reply of 8 December to the hon. Member for Gower, *Official Report*, column *238*, on Bristol channel sludge dumping, whether his Department will now initiate further monitoring surveys of the sewage sludge dump to update the results of the 1975 to 1978 survey published in fisheries research technical report no. 59;

(2) when his Department will publish the aquatic environment monitoring report for 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* Monitoring work on the aquatic environment is carried out on an ongoing basis and it is usually impracticable to draw detailed conclusions from one year's data. The report, which is expected to be published in early 1989, will cover field assessments made in 1986 and 1987. Such assessments were, in fact, made of the Bristol channel sewage sludge site in 1983 and 1987. The results have reaffirmed the findings reported in fisheries research technical report No. 59.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research known to his Department which is relevant to food poisoning and has been *(a)* ongoing and *(b)* commissioned in each of the last five years; and if he will state the source of funding in each case.

Mr. Ryder *[pursuant to his reply, 21 December 1988]:* The following list of research projects covers most of the publicly funded research relevant to microbial food poisoning ongoing and newly commissioned over the past two years. A fuller reply could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Microbiology research (Pathogens)

Institutes	*Project number*	*Title*
CSG: Commission with the Research Associations MAFF Funded Work		
FMBRA	F7	Survival and Growth of Salmonellae and *Bacillus subtilis* in Baking Ingredients
CFDRA	600	Growth Characteristics of Food Poisoning Organisms at Sub-lethal Temperatures
CFDRA	1022	Investigate Combinations of Sub-lethal Treatments to Preserve Processed Foods
CFDRA	3005	Recovery and Detection of Sub-lethally Injured Pathogens
CFDRA/BFMIRA	2950/M50	Microbial Antagonism to Increase the Safety and Stability of Chilled Foods
BFMIRA	M53	Low Sodium Chloride Foods/Microbiological Safety and Technological Characteristics
BFMIRA	M49	Rapid methods to assess the Microbiological Quality of foods
CFDRA	328	Spore Studies in Relation to Heat Processed Foods
CFDRA	400	Resistance of Bacterial Spores to Sterilisation of Packaging Materials
BFMIRA	M57	Shelf-life Prediction of Chilled foods
BFMIRA	M42	Modes of Action and Interaction of preservatives on Micro-organisms
CSG: Open Contracting Fund		
Portsmouth Polytechnic	OC1119	Detection of Sub-lethal Injury in Micro-organisms (some industry funding)
Nottingham University	OC1199	Use of non-radioactive DNA Probes for the Detection of Pathogenic Bacteria in Food
IFR Reading	OC343206	Enzyme Linked Immunological Biosensors for Detection and Identifcation of Pathogenic Bacteria in Food (some support from industry)
Reading University	OC1198	Development of Rapid Methods for the Detection of Pathogenic Aeromonas Species in Food
Surrey University	OC1201	Fruit and Vegetable Presentation of Natural Mixed Acid Systems
IFR Norwich	OC242156	Influence of Food Components and Preservative Factors on Food Borne Pathogens (some support from industry)
Bath University	N268	Risk and Hazard Analysis in Egg Infections
IFR Bristol	N519	Heat Induced Thermotolerance in Food Poisoning Organisms
Lancaster PA	N575	Survey of Bacteriological Quality of Goats Milk
King's College London University	N432	Lysozyme Destruction of Gram Negative Organisms in Chicken and Red Meat
Huddersfield Polytechnic	N189	Bacteriological Hazards of Large Meat Roasts in Catering and Long Storage of Chilled Foods in Catering.
University Bristol/ PHL, Exeter	N441	Epidemiology of *Campylobacter jejuni* in Broiler Chickens
University Wales, Cardiff	N392	Gradient Plate Techniques in the Multi-factorial Control of Microbial Growth in Foods
University Leicester	N518	Effect of heat and irradiation on survival of Listeria in Chicken
University Reading	N267	Effect of Physical and Compositional Factors on the Heat Processing of Milk
CFDRA	N279	Markers for Retrospective Examination of Heat Processed Meats
RSGB	N470	Hygiene Advisory Service Joint Research Association

Institutes	Project number	Title
AERC/MAFF-funded		
IFR Bristol	141052	Bacteria and Hygiene in Abbatoirs
IFR Bristol	141053	Bacteria on Meat and Food-borne Illness
IFR Bristol	141055	Define Factors Controlling Microbial Growth and Develop Predictive Models
IFR Bristol	141083	Manipulation of the Microbial Flora of the Gut of Young Chicks to Control Salmonellas in Broilers
IFR Norwich	242110	Microbiological Safety of Chilled Foods Including Salads
IFR Norwich	242114	Microbiological Hazards in Domestic and insttutional Handling of Food
IFR Bristol	141084	Safety and Quality of Poultry Products in Relation to Processing
IFR Reading	343004	Improve Existing and Develop New Methods to Assess Hygenic Quality of Foods
IFR Reading	343154	Election Transfer Coupling as a Rapid Method for Assessment of Bacterial Contamination
IFR Norwich	232031	Determination of Food Constituents and Contaminants by ELISA
AFRC/DES-funded		
IFR Bristol	141037	Effects of Heat, Cold, Drying, Radiation on Bacteria and their Recovery and Growth
IFR Bristol	141068	Food Safety by Predicting Microbial Growth
IFR Norwich	242009	Develop Novel Preservative Systems to Prevent Growth of Food Poisoning Bacteria including *Clostrium botulinum*
IFR Norwich	242156	Influence of Food Components and Preservative Factors on Food-borne Pathogens (some industrial funding)
Bristol	141035	Rapid methods of Characterisation of Bacteria
IFR Bristol	141036	Classification of Bacteria from Meat and Meat Products
IFR Norwich	232134	Development of Immunoassays for the Rapid Detection of Food Poisoning Organisms
IFR Reading	343206	Enzyme-linked Immunological Biosensors for the Specific Detection of Pathogenic Bacteria in Foods (OC)
DANI-funded		
BEL	002012	Pathogenic Staphylococci in Dairy Products
BEL	002031	Survival of Campylobacter in Packaged Lamb
BEL	002015	The Microbiology of Meat and Fish Packaged for Retail Sale
BEL	002017	A Study of the Effect of Controlled Atmospheres on the Microbial Spoilage of Packaged Vegetables
BEL	002023	Aerobic Spore-forming Bacteria Occurring in Bulked Milk Supplies
BEL	002022	Development of Direct Epifluorescent Filter Techniques (DEFT)
DAFS-funded		
HRI	071013	Determine the Factors Affecting Growth of Psychrotrophs in Cooled or Heat Treated Cooled Milk
HRI	071048	Determine the Heat Stability Characteristics of Thermal Resistant Sporulating Organisms

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

1. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

2. **Rev. William McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

10. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

12. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend and right hon. and hon. Members to the reply I gave on 10 November, *Official Report*, column 468. Since then six people have been killed in incidents arising from the security situation in Northern Ireland. A policeman was shot dead on 21 November, a 13-year-old girl and her grandfather were killed in an explosion outside Benburb RUC station on 23 November, a civilian was shot dead in Portadown on 13 December and a UDR soldier was shot dead in Downpatrick on 16 December. All were murdered by the Provisional IRA. A further civilian was shot dead by gunmen at Coagh on 24 November. Although no one has claimed responsibility for this murder, it is believed to have been the work of a Loyalist paramilitary organisation.

The continued courage and vigilance of the security forces have prevented further terrorist outrages which would have inevitably resulted in greater loss of life and destruction of property.

The efforts of the security forces continue to yield encouraging results. Since the beginning of the year a total of 405 people have been charged with serious offences,

including 20 with murder and 32 with attempted murder. Some 530 weapons, over 103,000 rounds of ammunition and 9,630 lbs of explosives have been recovered in Northern Ireland.

During the same period, the Garda Siochana has recovered 306 weapons, about 140,600 rounds of ammunition and about 1,100 lbs of explosives.

Harland and Wolff and Short Bros.

3. **Mr. Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the position of both Harland and Wolff, and Shorts plc, in relation to the Government's plans to privatise the companies.

Mr. Viggers: The Government believe that the best prospects for the future of Harland and Wolff and Shorts lie within the private sector and they are seeking purchasers for the two companies on this basis. Negotiations are continuing with possible acquirers of Harland and Wolff; these include senior managers at the yard who are considering a management/employee buy-out.

With regard to Shorts, an advertisement was placed on 17 November inviting parties to register their interest in buying Shorts with the Government's merchant bank advisers, Kleinwort Benson, by 2 December.

Nationalised Industries (Privatisation)

4. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress to date regarding privatisation of Northern Ireland nationalised industries.

Mr. Viggers: In strict terms there are no nationalised industries in Northern Ireland.

Consultants have carried out a preliminary study of the main elements likely to influence the approach to the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. Further work is being undertaken on points raised by this study and the Government's proposals will be published in due course.

Negotiations are continuing with possible acquirers of Harland and Wolff; these include senior managers at the yard who are considering a management/employee buy-out.

With regard to Shorts, an advertisement was placed on 17 November inviting parties to register their interest in buying Shorts with the Government's merchant bank advisers, Kleinwort Benson, by 2 December.

Harland and Wolff

5. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made to bring Harland and Wolff's management/employee buyout bid to fruition.

Mr. Viggers: I have had discussions with senior managers of Harland and Wolff about a proposed management/employee buy-out and my officials have also met these managers and their financial advisers to progress matters. No firm proposals have yet been tabled.

16. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will reconsider his decisions to privatise Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The Government believe that the best prospects for the future of Harland and Wolff lie within the private sector and is seeking purchasers for the company on this basis. Negotiations are continuing with possible acquirers of Harland and Wolff; these include senior managers at the yard who are considering a possible management/employee buy-out.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met trade union representatives from Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I met representatives of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions from Harland and Wolff on 31 October 1988. We exchanged views on the future of the company and I have since written to the confederation in response to a paper which the representatives left with me.

Nurses (Regrading)

6. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met senior representatives from the units of managements within the Eastern and Southern health and social services boards to discuss anomalies resulting from the implementation of the clinical grading review for nurses and midwives.

Mr. Needham: I have not had any such meetings.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of grades issued before commencement of the appeal procedure as a result of the clinical grading review, giving a breakdown of all grades *(a)* on a Northern Ireland basis, *(b)* on an area board basis, *(c)* on a unit of management basis and *(d)* on a hospital basis.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* Details of the grading outcomes for nursing staff covered by the clinical grading review for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Northern Ireland [1] Numbers of staff and percentage movement to each grade

	Percentage	*Numbers*
A.	17	2,622
B.	1	154
C.	12	1,851
D.	16	2,468
E.	32	4,935
F.	4	617
G.	14	2,159
H.	2	308
I.	2	308
Staff in post wholetime equivalent	—	15,422

[1] Includes staff employed by the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Northern Ireland.

For the grading outcomes on an area board basis, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) on 9 December 1988.

Information on a unit of management and hospital basis is not held centrally.

Short Brothers

7. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about progress with the privatisation of Short Brothers.

17. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the proposed timetable for the sale of Short Brothers.

Mr. Viggers: An advertisement was placed on 17 November inviting interested parties to register their interest by 2 December with the Government's merchant bank advisers, Kleinwort Benson. A number of potential purchasers have been identified and an information memorandum is being prepared which will be issued soon to selected prospective buyers.

Kilroot Power Station

8. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when construction work will commence on phase II of Kilroot power station.

Mr. Viggers: No decision has yet been taken on this matter. On current planning assumptions, Kilroot II will be needed by 1995-96 and construction work should begin by 1992. The start of construction would be brought forward if there was a decision to make the station available earlier or if flue gas desulphurisation plant had to be installed. Both these issues are under consideration at present.

Driving Licences

9. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he plans to bring the law on driving licences into line with that which applies to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: I plan to bring the law regarding vocational licensing into line with that proposed in the Great Britain Road Traffic (Driving Licences and Information Systems) Bill presently before Parliament. I have no plans at present to change any other aspects of driver licensing.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: At 10 November 1988, the latest date for which unemployment figures are available, there were 108,981 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, representing 15·7 per cent. of the work force.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers of people unemployed and claiming benefit by *(a)* constituency and *(b)* district in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* The information cannot be given by constituency or district area. The numbers by social security office are as follows:

Number of people unemployed and claiming benefit at 10 November 1988

Social security office	*Number*
Andersonstown	4,138
Antrim	2,763
Armagh	2,738
Ballymena	3,153
Ballymoney	2,243
Ballynahinch	701
Banbridge	1,627
Bangor	2,358
Carrickfergus	1,670
Coleraine	3,357
Cookstown	1,891
Corporation Street	5,032
Downpatrick	1,250
Dungannon	3,115
Enniskillen	3,716
Falls	4,575
Holywood Road	4,276
Kilkeel	871
Knockbreda	2,709
Larne	1,500
Limavady	1,907
Lisburn	3,199
Londonderry	8,165
Lurgan	2,766
Magherafelt	2,493
Newcastle	929
Newry	5,032
Newtownabbey	3,175
Newtownards	2,290
Omagh	2,726
Portadown	2,076
Shaftesbury Square	3,570
Shankill	3,241
Strabane	2,927
Total	99,179

Anglo-Irish Conference

13. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the items on the agenda for the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference.

Mr. Tom King: The agenda for the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference has not yet been prepared, but it is likely to include subjects raised at the last meeting of the conference on 14 December. A copy of the joint statement issued after that meeting, which sets out the subjects then discussed, has been placed in the Library.

Ultimate Dream Project

14. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is presently taking to secure the Ultimate Dream cruise liner project for Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Viggers: Senior managers at Harland and Wolff are considering whether the Ultimate Dream, or other orders, could provide the basis for a buy-out by managers and employees at the yard. I have had discussions with these managers, but, as yet, no firm proposals have been tabled.

Republic of Ireland (Discussions)

15. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: No agenda has yet been drawn up for my next meeting with Irish Ministers, but it is likely to include the discussion of subjects raised at the last meeting

of the Intergovernmental Conference on 14 December. A copy of the joint statement issued after that meeting, which sets out the subject discussed, has been placed in the Library.

RUC-Scottish Police (Collaboration)

18. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and if he discussed the collaboration policies of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Scottish police forces in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Tom King: I last met the Chief Constable on 13 December. The nature of our discussions is confidential.

Terrorism

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civilian fatalities have occurred as a result of unrest in the Province during the period 1 January 1970 to 31 October 1985; and how many of these fatalities have been attributed to *(a)* Loyalist paramilitaries, *(b)* Republican paramilitaries, *(c)* security forces, *(d)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and *(e)* unidentified forces.

Mr. Ian Stewart: During the period 1 January 1970 to 31 October 1985, a total of 1,693 civilians were killed as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland. This total included suspected terrorists killed by their own devices. It is not possible to state with certainty which paramilitary organisation was responsible for every murder, but, as far as can be ascertained, the breakdown of these deaths is as follows:—

(a) Deaths attributed to Loyalist paramilitary organisations —between 600 and 700.

(b) Deaths attributed to Republican paramilitary organisations—between 700 and 800.

In addition, 225 deaths were attributed to the Army (including the UDR), and 33 to the RUC.

Royal Victoria Hospital

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently waiting for cardiac operations at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast; what is the average waiting time; and what proposals there are to reduce the waiting time for such operations.

Mr. Needham: At 30 June, 1988 there were 733 people waiting for cardiac operations at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast. Information on average waiting times is not collected, but of the 733 patients on the waiting list, 354 have been waiting for less than one year. As part of a range of measures designed to reduce waiting times I have recently announced that a £1·3 million capital scheme will be undertaken in 1989 to expand the post-operative recovery facilities at the Royal Victoria hospital from eight to 12 beds. A comprehensive review of adult cardiology services in the Eastern board areas has also been carried out by a committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Badenoch. The committee's report, which recommends measures to increase the number of heart operations at the Royal Victoria within existing resources, has been accepted for implementation and will be reflected in the board's operational plans for 1989-90.

Mature Students

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students aged 26 years and over enrolled in Northern Ireland universities and colleges of education in the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Available information is for those aged 25 and over and is as follows:

Academic year	*Full time*	*Part time*
1982-83	1,016	956
1983-84	1,069	1,188
1984-85	1,423	3,302
1985-86	1,681	3,951
1986-87	1,776	3,927

Note: Figures from 1984-85 onwards reflect the merger of The New University of Ulster and the Ulster Polytechnic.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the funding of further and higher education in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a statistical breakdown of the characteristics of students in further and higher education in Northern Ireland analysed by *(a)* age, *(b)* sex, *(c)* country of origin and *(d)* category of award for the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Available information is as follows:

Academic year	*(a) By age*			*(b) By sex*		*(c) Country of origin*	
	20 and under	*21-24*	*25 and over*	*Men*	*Women*	*United Kingdom*	*Other*
1982-83	22,683	5,615	1,626	14,596	15,328	29,182	[1]742
1983-84	20,411	5,895	1,980	13,550	14,736	27,568	[1]718
1984-85	21,540	6,244	1,818	14,148	15,454	28,924	678
1985-86	22,168	6,704	2,019	14,342	16,549	29,921	970
1986-87	22,551	7,071	2,239	14,436	17,425	30,595	1,266

[1] Estimated.

(d) Category of awards

	Education and library board awards			
	Full value		Lesser value	DENI awards[1]
	Mandatory	Discretionary		
1982-83	10,182	171	734	1,908
1983-84	10,414	712	608	1,947
1984-85	11,054	837	840	1,950
1985-86	10,940	785	854	2,074
1986-87	11,470	766	840	2,075

[1] Includes postgraduate bursaries and studentships and teacher training awards. Excludes adult education bursaries (c. 40-50 per annum) and youth service awards (c. 30-50 per annum).

Student and Parent Governors

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the position of student and parent governors in further education college governance; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Some further education interests have written objecting to any parental representation on college governing bodies and seeking assurances about student representation. For the purposes of legislation I intend to follow closely the approach in the Education Reform Act.

Prevention of Terrorism

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown of those people arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for each year since 1974 *(a)* at ports, *(b)* at airports, *(c)* in their homes and *(d)* in other places; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures between men and women detainees.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Available information is as follows:

Year	Firearms recovered[1]	Explosives recovered[1] (kgs)	Occupied houses searched[2]
1974	1,236	11·7	19,576
1975	820	4·9	3,907
1976	736	9·7	10,749
1977	563	1·7	9,264
1978	393	0·9	6,309
1979	300	0·9	4,740
1980	203	0·8	2,960
1981	357	3·4	2,420
1982	288	2·3	2,979
1983	166	1·7	693
1984	187	3·8	769
1985	173	3·3	446
1986	174	2·4	689
1987	206	5·8	790
1988[3]	431	3·4	2,281

[1] These amounts refer to total amounts of munitions recovered not just finds during searches of occupied houses.

[2] House searches are primarily carried out under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts Legislation.

[3] To 31 October.

Helios Programme

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding the Helios programme outlining what plans or proposals the Government has for it in respect of Northern Ireland; whether there was any policy consideration behind Northern Ireland not being invited to nominate representatives to the relevant European Community advisory committee; and whether arrangements have been made to take account of the views of the relevant agencies in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* A working group of officials from all Northern Ireland Departments with an interest in the European Community second action programme for disabled people (the Helios programme) has been established. The group is in turn represented on a national co-ordinating committee which was set up to oversee the United Kingdom's participation in the programme. A vocational rehabilitation project nominated by the Department of Economic Development has been included in the EC network of local model projects.

It is a matter for each of the member states in the European Community to field representatives to meetings of EC committees and it would be unrealistic to expect each region of a member state to be represented on the committees. The co-ordinating arrangements that I have described are, however, designed to ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are taken into account by the United Kingdom representatives on the EC advisory committee. Consideration is currently being given to the most appropriate way, to facilitate the involvement of disability organisations thoughout the United Kingdom in the programme.

Family Credit

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers in receipt of family credits in Northern Ireland; what is the total number of dependents involved; and what is the total amount paid in family credit in the latest available week in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* At 6 December 1988 the estimated number of people in receipt of family credit in Northern Ireland was 14,000. The estimated number of dependent children involved was 36,000. Precise details of the amount paid in any particular week are not available but it is estimated that the total amount paid from April 1988 to 6 December 1988 was £19 million.

Government Training Centres

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers in each GTC in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* Attendance at each of the 12 training centres in Northern Ireland during week commencing 12 December 1988 was as follows:

	Number
Alfred street, Belfast	136
Ballymena	385
Boucher road, Belfast	262
Craigavon	273
Dundonald	385
Enniskillen	132
Felden	286
Lisburn	167
Maydown	201
Newry	306

	Number
Omagh	218
Springtown	200

Income Support

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers receiving unemployment benefit but not receiving income support in each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Numbers receiving unemployment benefit only at 10 November 1988

Social security office	Numbers
Andersontown	818
Antrim	546
Armagh	542
Ballymena	623
Ballymoney	444
Ballynahinch	139
Banbridge	321
Bangor	466
Carrickfergus	330
Coleraine	664
Cookstown	374
Corporation Street	1,193
Downpatrick	247
Dungannon	616
Enniskillen	735
Falls	905
Holywood Road	846
Kilkeel	172
Knockbreda	536
Larne	297
Limavady	377
Lisburn	633
Londonderry	1,615
Lurgan	547
Magherafelt	493
Newcastle	184
Newry	995
Newtownabbey	628
Newtownards	453
Omagh	539
Portadown	411
Shaftesbury Square	706
Shankill	641
Strabane	579
Total	19,615

Mr. John Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers receiving each of the premium rates of income support at each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* While some income support claimants receive more than one premium, statistics for the highest value premium only are recorded centrally in such cases. On this basis the numbers in each category of premium at the latest date are as follows:

Social Security office	Higher pensioner premium	Ordinary pensioner premium	Disability premium	Lone parent premium	Family premium
Andersonstown	191	898	404	1,709	1,119
Antrim	391	912	345	892	643
Armagh	431	1,229	325	344	825
Ballymena	426	1,378	349	616	629
Ballymoney	457	984	317	347	742
Ballynahinch	137	457	132	133	126
Banbridge	366	931	197	312	350
Bangor	469	1,045	214	575	289
Carrickfergus	279	530	156	458	346
Coleraine	492	1,127	284	757	743
Cookstown	351	801	237	226	549
Corporation Street	716	2,329	629	1,950	1,283
Downpatrick	225	406	211	326	224
Dungannon	455	1,666	407	403	972
Enniskillen	919	2,475	515	457	922
Falls	393	1,431	508	1,714	1010
Holywood Road	720	1,825	378	1,056	735
Kilkeel	166	352	111	104	178
Knockbreda	706	1,586	279	596	237
Larne	217	540	160	341	250
Limavady	259	579	175	310	688
Lisburn	701	1,420	355	730	526
Londonderry	616	2,410	845	2,087	2,164
Lurgan	445	1,121	419	679	707
Magherafelt	502	1,437	374	320	735
Newcastle	213	503	100	127	181
Newry	729	2,082	555	656	1,510
Newtownabbey	385	1,100	324	789	551
Newtownards	447	1,026	297	457	341
Omagh	519	1,421	460	522	673
Portadown	344	920	232	416	248
Shaftesbury Square	464	1,235	318	858	275
Shankill	537	1,021	252	803	348
Strabane[1]	543	1,317	386	569	663
Total	15,211	40,494	11,250	22,639	21,782

[1] All figures represent the number of claimants at 31 August 1988 except for Strabane where the latest figures available are at 31 May 1988.

Orlit Houses

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of the main contractors invited to tender for the contract to replace Orlit houses at Barnagh park, Donaghadee; and how many of these contractors have their head offices within the boundary of the borough of Ards.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the chief executive has advised me that the following five firms were invited to submit tenders for phase 1 of the Orlit replacement scheme at Barnagh park, Donaghadee:

KD Contracts, Belfast
Kelly and Keenan, Ballynahinch
McQuillan Bros, Newry
Pilot Construction Ltd., Belfast
Polly Bros. Ltd., Downpatrick

None of these firms has its head office within the boundary of the borough of Ards.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of the main contractors being invited to tender for the contract to replace Orlit houses at Darragh road, Comber; and how many of these contractors have their head offices within the boundary of the borough of Ards.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the chief executive has advised me that the following seven firms were invited to submit tenders for phase 1 of the Orlit replacement scheme at Darragh road, Comber:

Calvert Bros. Ltd., Portadown
Coleman Bros., Portaferry
P. J. Conway (Contractors) Ltd., Magherafelt
Gilbert-Ash (NI) Ltd., Belfast
McParland and Gordon Ltd., Banbridge
McQuillan Bros., Newry
Savage Bros. Contractors Ltd., Ballynahinch

One of these firms has its head office within the boundary of the borough of Ards.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed on YTS in Nottingham.

Mr. Cope: As at 19 December 1988, there were 3,619 young people in training on YTS in the city of Nottingham, of whom 518 had employed status.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have come to the end of their bridging allowance without an offer of a YTS place in Blyth Valley.

Mr. Cope: It is not possible to provide this information, either nationally or for Blyth Valley. While young people are receiving bridging allowance they are entitled to take a job or YTS place without going through the careers service, and may also return to full-time education without letting the careers service know. Others will have reached the end of their bridging allowance period without making themselves available to receive the offer of a YTS place.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployment benefit adjudication officers are available to serve the Nottingham, North constituency; and how many cases they are currently dealing with.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the precise form requested, as adjudication officers are not attached to individual unemployment benefit offices or constituencies. They work in groups which cover a number of offices.

On 30 November 1988, adjudication officers were currently considering 1,591 cases arising on claims for unemployment benefit in the adjudication office area of Nottingham, which includes the constituency of Nottingham, North. The number of adjudication officers serving the Nottingham adjudication office is five.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the retail prices index advisory committee will review (i) the implications of the abolition of domestic rates, (ii) the inclusion of holiday expenditure in the index, (iii) progress on recommendations made in the committee's last report and (iv) the exclusion of mortgage interest payments from the index.

Mr. Lee: The committee is currently considering the first of the matters mentioned by the hon. Gentleman and will shortly be turning its attention to the second and third, but we have no plans to exclude mortgage interest payments from the index and this is not on the committee's agenda.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the occasions on which the retail prices index advisory committee has been convened since 1986.

Mr. Lee: The committee was convened in October 1988 for the first time since 1986. It is now meeting and will be reporting in the course of next year.

Telephone Survey

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what fee was paid by his Department to IFF Research Ltd. for the telephone survey of 1,073 London employees; and what was the method and purpose of the survey.

Mr. Cope: The total fee paid to IFF Research Ltd. for the telephone survey of 1,073 employers was £41,975. Full details of the methods used were published by HMSO in November 1988 in a report entitled "The London Labour Market", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Building Sites (Safety)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of building sites in London, notified to the health and safety inspectorate on the appropriate notification form under the Factories Act 1961, on the Health and Safety Executive computerised database SHIELD, during 1987; and how many inspectors were in the field in London inspecting these sites during 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive received 3,316 notifications of building sites in 1987. Details of notifications are not retained on HSE's computerised database SHIELD. On 31 December 1987 12 qualified inspectors were employed on construction work in London.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of *(a)* qualified factory inspectors and *(b)* trainee factory inspectors, employed by the Health and Safety Executive for the latest date for which information is available; what this is expected to be by March 1989 if current recruitment intentions are followed; and what percentage of factory inspectors were or will be trainee inspectors, at each date.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 December 1988 484 qualified factory inspectors and 78 trainee factory inspectors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate. In addition 50 qualified factory inspectors were employed elsewhere in HSE. The number of inspectors in post at the end of the financial year will depend both on the timing of individual recruitment and on whether unforeseen wastage occurs. The executive's objective is to reach a target of 588 inspectors in post in the inspectorate early in the next financial year.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what charges were made by the Health and Safety Executive to the organisers of the conference comprising representatives of private fee-paying schools held in the conference room of the health and safety area office at Quay house, Quay street, Manchester, on 23 November 1988 for the use of (i) the premises, (ii) equipment, (iii) refreshments and (iv) Health and Safety Executive staff time.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes in the staffing levels of the Health and Safety Executive have been effected in Scotland since 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of Health and Safety Executive staff employed in Scotland in each year since 1980 was as follows:

1 January	*Number*
1980	231
1981	225
1982	208
1983	200
1984	193
1985	187
1986	176
1987	176
1988	177

On 1 December 1988, the total was 166.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes in the staffing levels of the Health and Safety Executive have been effected in Britain, excluding Scotland, since 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of Health and Safety Executive staff employed in Britain, excluding Scotland, in each year since 1980 was as follows (1 January figures):

	Number
1980	3,987
1981	3,841
1982	3,631
1983	3,536
1984	3,525
1985	3,524
1986	3,463
1987	3,521
1988	3,324

On 1 December 1988 the total was 3,359.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplace inspections were carried out by the inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive in the Scotland, west area for the years 1981 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available for the years 1981 to 1984.

The following table shows the number of workplace inspection visits made by the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates in the Scotland, west area for each year from 1985 to 1988:

Year[1]	*Number of visits*
1985-86	9,464
1986-87	9,083
1987-88	9,586

[1] 1 April—31 March.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any changes are planned for the staffing levels of the two Scottish areas of the inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive recruits factory and agricultural inspectors on a national basis through open competition. Recruitment is currently under way. Allocations of new recruits to areas will depend on the number of successful candidates who take up post and on the operational needs of each office, and it is not yet possible to say how many successful candidates will be allocated to the two Scottish areas.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any changes are planned in the staffing levels of the inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive for Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: Recruitment is currently under way with the aim of increasing the numbers of factory and agricultural inspectors in the inspectorates from 1 December 1988 levels of 562 and 154 respectively to 588 factory inspectors and 160 agricultural inspectors early in the new financial year. Planned staffing levels beyond this period are still being formulated and will be published in the Health and Safety Commission's plan of work in March 1989.

Accidents

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the waiting time for inspections carried out as a result of all reported accidents, area by area throughout Britain, for the years 1981 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of fatal and major reported accidents in the Scotland, west area for the years 1981 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is given in the table:

Numbers of fatal and major injuries reported[1] in the Health and Safety Executive's Scotland West Area

Fatal Injuries

Year	*Employees*	*Self-employed*	*non-employed*
1981	33	4	7
1982	28	—	11
1983	15	4	3
1984	23	2	4
1985	17	1	9
Q1 1986	8	—	1
[2]1986-87	13	2	7
[5]1987-88	19	2	4

Major Injuries[3]

Year	*[4]Employees*	*Self-employed*	*non-employed*
1981	631	1	95
1982	625	3	121
1983	610	1	62
1984	534	2	104
1985	516	9	74
Q1 1986	148	2	25
[2]1986-87	836	13	293
[5]1987-88	743	15	328

[1] Injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory, agricultural and nuclear installations inspectorates and to the local authorities and occurring as a result of work activities. Data for HSE's mines and quarries inspectorate, are only readily available for the year commencing 1 April 1987. The provisional figures are: 1 fatal and 18 major injuries.

[2] Year commencing 1 April 1986.

[3] From 1981 to 1986 Q1, as defined in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 and thereafter in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR). RIDDOR widened the definition of a major injury. Figures for major injuries for 1986-87 onwards are therefore not comparable with previous figures.

[4] Includes fatal injuries to members of the public arising from work activity, only for those fatal injuries reported to local authorities in 1981-1985.

[5] The provisional data excludes that from local authorities.

Child Care Payments

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of women on employment training are in receipt of child care payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of employment training participants qualifying for child care payments is not yet available. It is planned to collect information at the end of March and the results will be available at the end of April.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 10 November 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Brent was 11,928.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people *(a)* employed and *(b)* self-employed in the United Kingdom on the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: In June 1988 there were 25,739,000 people in the work force in employment in the United Kingdom; of which 2,985,000 were self-employed. The work force in employment comprises employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the current levels of employment in the north-west of England.

Mr. Lee: In June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 2,603,000 people in the civilian work force in employment in the north-west region. This is an increase of 77,000 since June 1983. The civilian work force in employment comprises employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programme.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures for the parish of Renishaw in Derbyshire; and if he will make a statement on the estimated trend throughout 1989.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. Unemployment statistics are not available for parish areas. However, in November 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the local authority ward of Renishaw in Derbyshire was 106, compared with 146 in November 1987, a fall of 40 or 27·4 per cent. over the year. This comparison is affected by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations for young people aged under 18.

This Department does not make predictions of unemployment.

Restart

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of unemployed people *(a)* called in for interview under the restart scheme and *(b)* who have attended those interviews.

Mr. Lee: Since 1 July 1986, some 6·5 million invitations have been issued to attend a restart interview and 5 million interviews have been conducted.

Construction Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he intends to take to reduce the numbers of people seriously injured and maimed every year in Great Britain as a result of construction accidents.

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to ensure adequate training and supervision and reasonable precautions in the construction industry to prevent falls.

Mr. Cope: New regulations are being prepared which provide for the management and co-ordination of health and safety on multi-contractor sites, increase the number of safety supervisors in smaller companies and amend the site notification procedure to identify sites where there are high-risk activities. The introduction of regulations which would make the wearing of safety helmets compulsory on contruction sites is also planned.

In addition to concentrating on the inspection of the more hazardous activities in the construction industry, HSE inspectors will also be paying attention to the quality of site management and its ability to manage health and safety. They will pursue their inquiries and any enforcement action to the highest levels in companies which do not measure up to the standards expected of them.

Mechanical Excavators (Safety)

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made towards the harmonisation of vehicle controls on mechanical excavators in use within the European Community in the interests of operator safety.

Mr. Cope: Between now and 1992 European standards will be prepared to support the harmonisation of safety requirements for all machinery including excavators. No decision has been made within the European Community as to the inclusion of vehicle controls.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the National Council for Vocational Qualifications has now defined the levels of competence and training above level 4; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: No. The national council is currently discussing with relevant professional bodies how the national vocational qualifications framework might be extended above level 4. The council has been asked to report to Ministers on the outcome of these discussions next year.

Tourism

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many hotels and tourism-related establishments have received section 4 grants since 1987; how many of these are in Cumbria; and if he expects to make an announcement on Government support for the tourism industry in the near future.

Mr. Lee: Between April 1987 and November 1988 the English tourist board made offers of section 4 grant assistance to 1,008 hotel and tourism-related projects, of which 72 are in Cumbria. I shall shortly be considering the outcome of the review of tourism policy which I announced in July. This is bound to take a little time, but I will make a further announcement as soon as possible.

Employment Training

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the quality assurance monitoring of employment training programmes has been initiated (i) nationally and (ii) in Oxfordshire.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes. Training Agency staff are working with training agents and training managers to develop the quality of employment training in all areas.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether there is any requirement on trainees to spend a set proportion of the working week on work experience and on directed training.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no requirement for trainees on employment training to spend a set proportion of the training week on practical experience and on directed training. However, everyone entering the programme is entitled to have at least 40 per cent. of their time on the programme spent on directed training.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to publish data about the number of employment training trainees receiving work placements in inner city areas (i) where local authorities are not participating in employment training and (ii) where local authorities are co-operating with employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no plans to collect or publish information in the form suggested.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those local authorities which took part in the community programme and are not providing work placements for employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Comprehensive information on training placements is not held by the Training Agency and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *47*, regarding the final outcome for those managing agents initially awarded provisional ATO status.

Mr. Cope: Of the 1,715 managing agents who had been awarded provisional ATO status after the first monitoring period (which ended on 31 July 1987):

1586 have been awarded full status
99 have withdrawn
18 were rejected
12 decisions remain to be made.

Sharon Friend (Accident)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether an investigation was made into the accident to Sharon Friend at a fairground in Bromley, Kent in May; and whether any prosecution is being undertaken.

Mr. Nicholls: An inspector from the Health and Safety Executive investigated the accident to Sharon Friend on 14 May 1988 at Beckenham fair. Prosecution is not proposed.

Claimants

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of claimants whose eligibility for state benefit was investigated via the unemployment benefit office because they did not satisfactorily complete *(a)* restart interview forms and *(b)* the availability for work forms, for each year since 1985 and for the latest available dates in 1988.

Mr. Lee: No claimant has their eligibility for benefits investigated simply because they have not satisfactorily completed a form. Cases may be referred for investigation if doubts arise about the claimant's availability for work. Referral would have to be considered if a claimant refused to supply information which was needed to confirm their availability.

Tourist Industry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now publish the report of the review committee into the tourist industry which he established last July.

Mr. Lee: I have not yet considered the report and I have no plans to publish it.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the annual rate of increase in the rates of payment under the job release scheme in each year of its existence; when the next increase is due; and what will be the amount of that increase.

Mr. Lee: The percentage increases in the allowances are given in the following table.

	Tax free		*Taxable*	
	higher	*lower*	*higher*	*lower*
1977-78	35·0	15·2		
1978-79	14·3	18·9		
1979-80	13·7	14·3		
1980-81	11·0	11·0	11·3	10·5
1981-82	8·9	8·8	8·5	9·5
1982-83	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0
1983-84	5·0	5·1	5·0	5·0
1984-85	3·9	4·1	0·9	1·7
1985-86	4·0	4·0	4·0	3·9
1986-87	3·1	3·8	0·7	0·8
1987-88	4·0	4·0	1·3	1·6

The next increase in allowances is due in April 1989. My Department is currently considering the level of increase and I will inform the House as soon as a decision is reached.

Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the European Community Labour and Social Affairs Council held in Brussels on 16 December.

Mr. Cope: The Council reached a common position on the proposed framework directive on measures to encourage improvement in the safety and health of workers at the work place. This is the keystone for setting minimum standards for health and safety at work agreed under the social policy provision of the Single European Act; and is broadly consistent with the existing United Kingdom legislation in this area.

Also in the field of health and safety at work, the Council adopted a directive on exposure limits. This provides for the establishment by member states of limit values for toxic substances. The Council was unable to reach a common position on a proposed directive covering the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to carcinogens at work, because the European Parliament had not yet delivered its opinion. It agreed that benzene which had been the substance of a separate proposal rejected by European Parliament would come within the scope of this proposal.

There was general discussion on the social dimension of the single market in the light of the European Council's conclusions at Hanover in June, and Rhodes in December this year. No resolution was adopted.

A wide measure of agreement was reached on the second phase of the community action programme for education and training for techology, on the basis of funding of 200 mecus over five years to encourage Communitywide co-operation between higher level education and training institutions and industry in support of the development and application of new technologies. This was agreed by a majority vote on the assumption that the legal base was article 128. The United Kingdom voted against as in our opinion the legal base should have included article 235. Other member states also voted against. These states reserved the right to challenge the decision before the European Court of Justice. Consideration of a resolution on continuing training was deferred till the Spanish Presidency.

The Council was unable to reach agreement on a proposed directive to reverse the legal burden of proof so that it fell upon the employer in equal pay and equal treatment cases. However, a resolution was adopted on the reintegration and late integration of women into working life. This emphasises the importance of measures to help women return to paid work after time at home looking after their families.

An extension was agreed to a regulation providing financial assistance to Greece for vocational training centres, and centres for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill and mentally handicapped. There was also some discussion on family benefits for migrant workers.

SCOTLAND

Transplants

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State Scotland if he will make a statement on the shortfall between organs available for transplant and the need for such organs; and if he will indicate how many potential recipients are likely to die because donor organs are not available, over the most convenient period.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to estimate how many patients are likely to die because donor organs are not available. The number of organs available for transplant fluctuates significantly from time to time. The balance between the need for organs and the number available also varies, depending also on such factors as whether a suitable match between recipient and donor can be found.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of money still owed to the National Health Service in Scotland by patients who used private beds between 1979 and 1988; and how many beds are currently available for private hire.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As at 31 March 1988, a total of £92,706 was due to the National Health Service in Scotland for treatment given to private in-patients, and 113 beds are currently available for private hire.

Baby Bottle Feeds

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to alter the methods by which health boards purchase baby bottle feeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no plans to alter the present purchase arrangements. A centralised United Kingdom contract was considered recently, but an analysis of tenders showed that there was little benefit to be gained by such an arrangement. The policy of the health Departments is to encourage all healthy mothers to breastfeed their babies, because breastfeeding provides the best infant nutrition.

Housing Starts

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public housing starts were made in Scotland in 1979 and in the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested was published in table 3 of Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin HSU No. 2 —"Housing Trends in Scotland 1987 Part 2". Copies of the bulletin were sent to all Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities in Scotland in 1979 and the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities was 7,443 in 1979-80 and 10,404 in 1986-87.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has for the number of people homeless in Scotland other than those accepted as such by local authorities, in 1979 and for the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on which any such estimate might be based is not collected centrally.

Housing (Expenditure)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was his Department's total expenditure on housing in 1979 and in the latest year available, at constant prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department's expenditure on housing at constant prices was £547 million in 1979-80 and £310·8 million in 1987-88. This calculation relates to those items of expenditure which occur in both years and can therefore be sensibly compared.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the total number of recorded crimes and *(b)* the total number of crimes committed against the person in 1979 and the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Crimes recorded: Scotland

	1979	*1987*
Total crimes	346,680	481,230
Crimes committed against the person[1]	14,698	23,616

[1] Comprises group 1 (non-sexual crimes of violence) and group 2 (crimes of indecency) of the Scottish Home and Health Department classification of crimes and offences.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total crime clear-up rate for Scotland, broken down by police authority area, in 1979 and the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Force	*Percentage clear-up rate: crimes*	
	1979	*1987*
Central	37·6	48·8
Dumfries and Galloway	40·4	53·8
Fife	43·4	41·8
Grampian	37·4	31·5
Lothian and Borders	29·2	38·9
Northern	60·7	62·9
Strathclyde	25·6	29·3
Tayside	35·0	42·7
Scotland	30·0	34·9

Prisons

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people held in prison in Scotland, both on remand and those serving a sentence, in 1979 and in the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Average daily prison population: Scotland

	1979	*1987*
Remand	691	938
Under sentence	3,891	4,509
Total[1]	4,585	5,446

[1] Includes also civil and court martial prisoners.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of recorded uses of firearms by police in Scotland in 1979 and in the latest available year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There were two incidents in 1979 and four in 1987 during which firearms were used by the police in Scotland. On each occasion the firearms were used for the destruction of animals.

Island Schools (Mathematics and English)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in any report submitted since 1 January 1986 by Her Majesty's inspector of schools in respect of a primary school in Orkney or Shetland, adverse criticism has been expressed about the teaching of mathematics or English; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since 1 January 1986, reports by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools have been published on seven primary schools and departments in Orkney and Shetland. Each of the reports draws attention to certain weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and of language within the context of its assessment of the work of the school as a whole. A copy of each report was sent to the hon. Member when it was published, and copies are also available in the Library.

Geese

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, and to what extent, he provides advice to landowners on methods that may justifiably be used to reduce or prevent the possibility of damage to grasslands or crops by Greenland white-fronted geese.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Landowners and occupiers are advised to undertake non-lethal scaring of Greenland white-fronted geese as the primary means of grassland or crop protection. Specific advice on the use of scaring devices is available from the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to issue licences under the provision of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the purpose of shooting Greenland white-fronted geese during the winter in order to reduce or prevent serious damage to improved grassland and crops; and if he will state the number of applications and the number of guns in respect of each such application he has received to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Licences will be issued to reduce or prevent serious damage to improved grassland and crops only in cases where non-lethal scaring has proved ineffective in preventing such damage caused by this species.

Twenty applications have been received. Sixteen applicants have requested the use of two guns and the remainder one gun. No licence has yet been issued.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state *(a)* the criteria which his professional staff will apply in determining the extent of damage that has been, or would have been, caused by Greenland white-fronted geese in considering individual applications to shoot such geese this winter and *(b)* the number of professional staff employed for this purpose.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The criteria applied are the methods of non-lethal scaring used and their effectiveness, the number of geese involved and frequency of grazing, physical evidence of damage, loss of grazing to livestock due to geese grazing competition and expected loss of future grassland productivity which would result from uncontrolled grazing by geese. Two members of professional staff are employed in the assessments.

Sports Premises (Eastbank)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what offers, and from whom, and for what purpose, the Scottish Sports Council has received in respect of the premises formerly occupied by Actionsport, Scotland, in the Eastbank educational complex in Shettleston constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. The premises were leased from Strathclyde regional council at a peppercorn rent and were returned to the owners on 30 November.

Local Health Councils

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the review of local health councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I shall consider the question of publication when I have received and studied the report I commissioned from the management consultants Arthur Young.

Mental Health Services

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health board the amount of money spent on mental health services in each year since 1979, the percentage increase in real terms and the percentage of overall spending on health services, both in the National Health Service and the private sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) on 17 June at column *78*. The table shows the percentage change in real terms between 1981-82 and 1986-87 and the percentage of overall spending on health services for 1986-87. There are no figures held centrally for private sector expenditure on mental health services.

Scottish Health Boards—Mental Health Services[1]

	Change in real terms 1981-82—1986-87	*Proportion of overall spend on health services 1986-87*
	percentage	*percentage*
Argyll and Clyde	0·5	15·5
Ayr and Arran	38·5	10·8
Borders	2·9	15·1
Dumfries and Galloway	9·3	18·8
Fife	31·5	18·7
Forth Valley	17·6	23·2
Grampian	4·9	15·5
Greater Glasgow	4·0	14·1
Highland	−4·8	14·3
Lanarkshire	14·7	13·1
Lothian	−1·6	13·0
Orkney[2]	57·0	0·4
Shetland	177·0	2·2
Tayside	−1·9	16·0
Western Isles	n/a	n/a

[1] Mental Health covers Mental Illness, Care of the Elderly with Mental Disability, and Mental Handicap.
[2] Excludes Care of the Elderly with Mental Disability.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Moray of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *45*, if he will break down the hectarage approved for planting and awaiting approval for planting under the woodland grant scheme into new planting and replanting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Conservancy	Area approved for planting (hectares)		Area awaiting approval for planting (hectares)	
	new planting	replanting	new planting	replanting
N(England)	86	121	535	831
E(England)	19	87	441	2,614
W(England)	73	153	540	790
Wales	105	197	461	214
N(Scotland)	2,134	128	4,884	843
M(Scotland)	658	93	2,152	742
S(Scotland)	266	78	2,895	1,887
Totals	3,341	857	11,908	7,921

Timber

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the United Kingdom shortfall in timber and timber derivatives in volume terms for each year since 1980;

(2) what was the estimated trade deficit in timber and timber derivatives in constant prices for each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The shortfall in timber and timber derivatives in the United Kingdom in volume terms (wood raw material equivalent) and in constant prices was as follows:

Year	Volume (millions of cubic metres)	Value £(1987-88) millions
1980	32·4	2,900
1981	32·0	3,500
1982	33·7	3,300
1983	34·1	3,000
1984	35·9	3,600
1985	35·2	4,000
1986	37·8	4,200
1987	44·0	4,800

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 January 1989

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Allowances

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members employ *(a)* none, *(b)* one, *(c)* two, *(d)* three, *(e)* four and *(f)* more than four employees who are paid from the secretarial and office allowance.

Mr. Wakeham: As at 31 December 1988, the numbers of staff directly employed by Members and paid out of the office costs allowance are as follows:

	Number
(a) none	25
(b) one	196
(c) two	265
(d) three	121
(e) four	29
(f) more than four	12

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many of the 1,267 employees paid from the office costs allowances are married or otherwise related to their employer.

Mr. Wakeham: No record is held of the relationship between Members and their employees and therefore I am unable to give the hon. Member the information requested.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will estimate the cost to public funds in a full year of enabling each hon. and right hon. Member to call upon the services of *(a)* one full-time secretary and one assistant accommodated in London and *(b)* one full-time secretary and one assistant accommodated in each constituency, using average rental and other overhead costs; and what is the current annual cost to public funds of the office allowances to hon. and right hon. Members.

Mr. Wakeham: The office costs allowance, currently £22,588, is available to right hon. and hon. Members to enable them to meet the cost of making arrangements which suit their own individual requirements. Consequently, the level of salaries paid by individual right hon. and hon. Members to their employees varies widely, reflecting the differences in working hours, duties and regional variations in pay. Additionally, there is no common pattern of use of information technology, which, together with the differences in local arrangements for constituency offices, leads to greater variations in costs.

In the circumstances, no meaningful estimate of the cost of the services listed can be given.

The total of the office costs allowance payable from the House of Commons Vote in 1988-89 is estimated at £14,683,000.

Salmonella

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many cases of salmonella poisoning have been reported in the Palace of Westminster in each of the last 20 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: During the past 20 years there has been no incident of salmonella poisoning identified as originating from any source in this House. However, one incident of food poisoning, which occurred in May 1988 and affected some 85 persons, was attributed to an outbreak of salmonella poisoning in the House of Lords. I understand that a subsequent investigation identified the probable cause, and action designed to avoid a recurrence has been taken.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Hearing Aid Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the registrar of the Hearing Aid Council was appointed; and what is the duration of his appointment.

Mr. Forth: The appointment of the registrar of the Hearing Aid Council and all matters to do with his conditions and terms of service are the sole responsibility of the council. The present registrar was appointed in 1969.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Minister responsible for the Hearing Aid Council last consulted regarding his appointments to the council and the implementation of the code of practice in relation to audiological technicians.

Mr. Forth: The Department of Health was last consulted over appointments to the Hearing Aid Council in December 1987, the latest occasion on which a council position occupied by a member with specialised medical knowledge and—or audiological technical knowledge fell vacant.

The council's present code of practice was approved by the Secretary of State in 1984 following interdepartmental consultation, including with the then Department of Heath and Social Security. Implementation of the council's code of practice is a matter for the council itself.

Recycling

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he intends to introduce legislation to ensure the use of packaging materials designed for re-use and recycling.

Mr. Forth: The Department has no plans to introduce legislation to ensure the use of packaging materials designed for re-use and recycling.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives his Department is taking to encourage the production of recyclable materials and returnable packaging.

Mr. Forth: The DTI commissioned research in 1985 on design for recyclability. A report on the study which took

two years to complete has recently been published and industry's response is awaited. Assistance on design and manufacturing is available under the Department's enterprise initiative.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives his Department is taking to encourage industry to invest in recycling processes.

Mr. Forth: The Department has undertaken a campaign built around a specially prepared video to make industry aware of the potential benefits of investing in recycling. In conjunction with this, there is a programme involving officials talking to selected groups which have a direct interest in waste management, making presentations to chambers of commerce and addressing conferences.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the names of those businesses sponsored through the north Peckham task force business development fund which *(a)* are located outside the north Peckham task force area and *(b)* whose employees are resident outside the north Peckham task force area.

Mr. Forth: The names of businesses supported by the north Peckham task force business development fund and located outside, but close to the task force area are:

(1) Danielle
(2) Beauty At Its Best
(3) Eleanor Williams
(4) Pennie Ray
(5) The Patchwork Kids
(6) Chris Johnson
(7) Femi Anthony Oye
(8) Tojak
(9) Radford's Interior Metalwork
(10) Wedding Cakes
(11) Ara Security Strap
(12) *Arts and Crafts
(13) Rip It Up
(14) Good As New
(15) *Govella
(16) Mode 7
(17) *Screaming Now
(18) Mr. Lams Restaurant
(19) *El Vergel

*These businesses are located outside the north Peckham task force area, but proprietors live within the area.

Information on those businesses whose employees are resident outside the north Peckham task force area is not available.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people trained on Brook Street Bureau courses sponsored by the north Peckham task force are residents of the north Peckham task force area.

Mr. Forth: To date, 11 north Peckham task force area residents have been trained in secretarial skills by Southwark college on behalf of the task force and Brook Street Bureau. In recognition of the difficulty of attracting task force residents, Brook Street has recruited extra staff to help with this work as well as counselling and job-hunting.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, by project and by amount, the names of all groups funded by the north Peckham task force whose head office lies outside the north Peckham task force area.

Mr. Forth: The information is listed in the table. Although the head offices of these organisations are located outside the task force area, many have a strong local base.

Sponsoring Organisation	*Project*	*Task Force Funds Committed* £
South Bank Poly	Techno Bus	6,250·00
Women's New Technology Group	Women's New Technology Fair	2,500·00
Teenage Information Network	Teenage Information Network	2,500·00
South East Training	South East Adult Training I	42,312·00
Rusjon Ltd.	Rusjon Apprentice Scheme	40,000·00
Industrial Society	Headstart in Business	12,883·00
Industrial Society	Vietnamese Headstart	6,380·00
Southwark Institute of Adult Education	Southwark Institute of Adult Education	4,000·00
Peckham Industrial Association	Peckham Industrial Association	3,500·00
Community Roots Trust	Ethnic Minority Data Base	16,000·00
Committee Against Drug Abuse	Committee Against Drug Abuse	1,250·00
Southwark Co-operative Development Asso.	Southwark Co-operative Development Asso. (SCDA) Translations	2,500·00
Southwark Co-operative Development Asso.	SCDA SC-DP Technology	20,000·00
Southwark Co-operative Development Asso.	SCDA Exhibition	9,450·00
Post YTS Group	Southwark Fair	7,130·00
Southwark Sports Advisory Council	Southwark Sports	36,454·00
Prince's Youth Business Trust	Prince's Youth Business Trust	10,000·00
PATH	PATH	25,000·00
South London Business Initiative	Task Force Business Development Fund	100,000·00
Caribbean Teachers Association	Carribbean Teachers Association	7,718·00
LENTA	LENTA	27,000·00
Hotel & Catering Training Board	Hotel & Catering Industrial Training Board (HCITB) I	35,950·00
Apex Trust	Apex	26,500·00
Work and Schools Project	Work and Schools Project	24,771·00
Project Fullemploy	BBC/Fullemploy	14,900·00
Southwark Unemployed Youth Centre	Summer Skill Workshop	3,225·00
Church & Community Projects Ltd.	Church & Community Projects	22,500·00
Southwark Chamber of Commerce	Southwark Chamber of Commerce	1,000·00
London Wildlife Trust	London Wildlife Trust	12,000·00
South Bank Polytechnic	City Technology Centre	13,000·00
Southwark Careers Service	Careers Service Newsletter	4,000·00
Industrial Society	Industrial Society (Management Course)	1,079·00
Ideal Homes (London) Ltd.	Ideal Homes Apprenticeship	44,159·00
Communications Group Ltd./Brook Street	Brook Street Phase I	4,738·90
MARI	MARI	3,334·00

Sponsoring Organisation	Project	Task Force Funds Committed £
Industrial Society	Industrial Society Training for Voluntary Organisations	19,527·00
Fairbridge Drake Society	Fairbridge Drake Society	40,320·00
Southwark College	Southwark College	7,986·00
Sight & Sound	Sight & Sound	12,000·00
LCCA	London Community Cricket Association	13,046·00
URBED	URBED	27,370·00
Croydon Action Group for the Unemployed	Home Safety Scheme	300,000·00
URBED	URBED (Vietnamese BEPS Course)	10,076·00
Community Industry	North Peckham Sewing Workshop	5,500·00
Community Industry	Practical Action	8,350·00
ILEA	ILEA	8,811·00
South East Training	South East Adult Training II	81,500·00
Southwark College/Brook Street	Brook Street Phase II	17,986·00
University College London	Skills Survey	48,000·00
Newpin	Newpin	14,000·00
Industrial Society	Spotlight in Music	621·00
Southwark College	Southwark College Business Video	2,400·00
Warwick Park School	Warwick Park School	1,000·00
Post YTS Group	Jets Fair	7,850·00
Southwark Council for Community Relations	Jobs in the City	11,869·00
Afro Caribbean Radio	Afro Caribbean Radio	4,500·00
MARI	MARI II	217,400·00
Family Welfare Association	Family Welfare Association	6,146·00
Forest of London	Forest of London	4,500·00
South London Business Initiative	Peckham Enterprise Centre	53,593·00
Data Communications Ltd./Caribbean Teachers Association/Pan African Organisation	Computer Literacy Centre Outreach	37,395·00
Essex University	Children of the Inner City	3,500·00
GLEB	GLEB	5,000·00
South East Training/Deptford Skills Centre	Deptford Skills Centre	25,400·00
Hotel and Catering Training Board	HCTB II	67,480·00
Walworth School	Walworth School World of Work	24,700·00
Sight and Sound	Sight and Sound II	5,800·00
Data Communications Ltd./Caribbean Teachers Association	Computer Literacy Outreach II	12,960·00
Peckham Trading Association	Peckham Trading Association I	22,977·00
NACRO	NACRO Print Workshop	60,160·00
The Bookplace	Peckham Book Place	4,800·00
J. Jarvis & Son Ltd.	Jarvis	215,000·00
Industrial Society	Industrial Society-Co-ordinator Post	31,349·00
Southwark College/Brook Street	Brook Street Phase III	21,000·00

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people trained on South East Adult Training courses sponsored by the north Peckham task force are residents of the north Peckham task force area.

Mr. Forth: Task force funding has assisted South East Adult Training to expand provision of training places in the area and to develop its curriculum. The training courses themselves are run on behalf of the Training Agency. So far, 85 task force area residents have attended the courses. The remaining trainees come from the surrounding areas. The task force is working with South East Adult Training to increase the numbers of trainees from the task force area.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by what method a project is submitted for funding by the north Peckham task force; if he will place a copy of the application form in the Library; and what are the procedures through which applicants find the outcome of their applications.

Mr. Forth: There is no set method or application form for task force funding. Potential project sponsors discuss their proposals with task force personnel. If the outline proposals meet task force objectives in terms of aims, targeting and cost, the project is then developed until it is suitable for approval. Sponsors will be told of the outcome of their applications by the task force, usually by means of a telephone call followed up by a letter.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications for funding from the north Peckham task force have been *(a)* received, *(b)* approved and funded, *(c)* approved and pending and *(d)* rejected.

Mr. Forth: There is no set method or application form for task force funding. Potential project sponsors discuss their proposals with task force personnel. If the outline proposals meet task force objectives in terms of aims, targeting and cost, the project is then developed until it is suitable for approval. There are therefore no records kept of the numbers of requests for funding received or rejected.

To date, a total of 84 project proposals have been approved and funded and 13 have been approved but not yet funded.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will specify the expenditure by the north Peckham task force development fund on each of the projects funded.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* This information is confidential. However, the total expended from the north Peckham task force business development fund to date is £127,650, of which £79,950 is in loans and £47,700 in grants. A total of 41 local businesses have benefited from development fund support.

London Greek Radio

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many times his Department has confiscated equipment held by London Greek Radio; where this equipment is now held; and if it will be returned to London Greek Radio.

Mr. Atkins: My Department's radio investigation service has seized equipment being illegally used by

London Greek Radio on 151 occasions. The equipment when seized is held in a secure store and disposed of in accordance with section 83 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Footwear Imports

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the percentage of the British footwear market of imports from Korea and Taiwan for each of the last three years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The figures are as follows:

United Kingdom Footwear Market (SIC 4510)
Percentage (by value) taken by Imports from South Korea and Taiwan

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
South Korea	1·9	2·0	3·0
Taiwan	3·3	2·9	4·0

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many oral parliamentary questions he has answered by written reply because the question was not reached at Question Time, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: A total of 443, for the period 1 January to 31 December 1988. This total includes 10 oral questions which were tabled for answer on days when the Department was not in the order of questions.

Coral Imports

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has regarding the importation of CITES-listed hard corals from the Philippines entering the United Kingdom during 1987 and 1988; whether any of the consignments were declared to be for scientific or educational purposes; what proportion of these corals was destined for the curio trade; and what proportion was imported live for the aquarium trade.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply. I will write to the hon. Member.

Task Force Expenditure

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will state the total Government expenditure by task forces required to safeguard the 4,000 jobs and facilitate the 20,000 training places specified in his answer to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) of 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *289-90*; and if he will specify how much of that expenditure and how many of the jobs and training places were in the north Peckham area.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The outputs referred to related to task force expenditure of some £31 million on around 900 projects. A total of £2 million of that figure related to north Peckham. As indicated in earlier answers to the hon. Member, the north Peckham task force does not seek to create jobs, but up to September 1988 had helped to create 1,055 training places for local people.

Task Force Initiative, Peckham

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many new jobs have been created by the task force initiative in Peckham;

(2) if he will list the new jobs created by the task force initiative in Peckham;

(3) what is the cost per job created by the north Peckham task force initiative in Peckham;

(4) how many further jobs he expects to be created as a direct result of the task force initiative in Peckham;

(5) how many of the new jobs created by the north Peckham task force have been filled by people resident in Peckham.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* I refer to my reply given to the hon. Member on 19 December at columns 19-21. The prime objective of the north Peckham task force is not to create jobs but to give local people appropriate skills to enable them to compete effectively for existing jobs in the buoyant London labour market.

WALES

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of the publication by the Secretary of state for Scotland of tobacco manufacturing employment statistics, he will provide figures showing the decline in employment in the tobacco manufacturing industry in Wales for any period since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Statistics of Trade Act 1947 prohibits disclosure of statistical information that could be related to an individual concern or of statistics from which such information can be deduced.

CIVIL SERVICE

Foreign Office (Disbursements)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the £209,756 of disbursements made by his Department to the Foreign and Commonwealth office in 1987-88.

Mr. Richard Luce: Information additional to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 12 December 1988 at column *416* is not immediately available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

"Our Changing Schools"

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether the statement on page 13 of the document entitled "Our Changing Schools" that, by 1990, a system for giving all school leavers a record of achievement will have been set up, means that those leaving school from 1995 onwards will receive a record of achievement document;

(2) with reference to the Central Office of Information publication issued on behalf of his Department entitled "Our Changing Schools," whether the statement as given on page 15 that from September 1989, 11 to 16-year-olds

will have to learn all national curriculum subjects, including a modern foreign language, is literally accurate; and whether the statement on page 13 that, by 1990, a system for giving all school leavers a record of achievement will have been set up, is literally accurate.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the final report of the records of achievement national steering committee which offers advice on the scope and timing of national arrangements. The report will be published for consultation shortly. Decisions on national arrangements will be taken in the light of those consultations. Hon. Members will be kept informed of developments.

I regret that there is a misprint on page 15 of "Our Changing Schools". The passage should have stated that, from September 1989, 11 to 14-year-olds will have to learn all the national curriculum subjects, including a modern foreign language. The error has been put right in subsequent reprints.

As the booklet makes clear elsewhere, the national curriculum is being introduced in stages from September 1989. The requirement to study all the core and foundation subjects for a reasonable time up to the age of 16 will be phased in over subsequent years.

Teachers (Training)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy on assessing the adequacy of proposals under section 62 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for the in-service training of teachers in a prospective grant-maintained school, with particular respect to the initial introduction of the national curriculum and the recent advice he has received from the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy on assessing the adequacy of proposals under section 62 of the Education Reform Act 1988 in the case of a secondary school with regard to arrangements for links with feeder schools, including links relating to the in-service training of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Proposals will be considered on their merits, having regard to best practice generally.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether the underspend on in-service teacher training grants in 1987-88 shown in Class XII, Vote 1, subhead IZ, is or will be carried forward to another year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the amount of grant in the Vote and *(b)* the amount of expenditure in each recent year on in-service teacher training grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Vote provision for the local education authority training grants scheme, which was introduced on 1 April 1987, is for the payment of grant to local education authorities, in response to claims submitted by those authorities in respect of training which they have provided. Vote provision for this purpose in 1987-88 was £105 million; the corresponding figure for 1988-89 is £130 million. The underspend of £25·6 million for 1987-88 appears mainly to reflect delays in submitting claims for training which took place in that year rather than a reduction in the anticipated volume of training. Late claims for 1987-88 continue to be paid as soon as possible after their submission from the Vote provision for the scheme.

Education Support Grants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy on determining a ceiling for the amount of education support grants in 1990-91 as a percentage of any other amount or by any other formula; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether special purpose grants payable to grant-maintained schools for purposes equivalent to education support grants will be taken into account for the purpose of maintaining a ceiling to the total annual amount of education support grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the light of the Local Government Finance Act and the White Paper "A New Planning Total" (Cm 441), my right hon. Friend intends to amend existing legislation so as to bring arrangements for determining the size of the education support grant (ESG) programme in line with those for the larger in-service teacher training grant programme. He has agreed to meet the local authority associations very soon to discuss the size and content of the 1990-91 ESG programme. As the intention is that there will no longer be a statutory ceiling on the programme, the question whether equivalent grant to grant-maintained schools is within or outside that ceiling does not arise.

British Antarctic Survey

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what costs have been allocated to the construction of a new survey ship for the British Antarctic Survey; and when he expects to *(a)* call for tenders and *(b)* announce the award of a construction contract.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Member will appreciate that, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, I cannot say at this time what funds have been allocated for the construction of a new research ship for the British Antarctic Survey.

Tenders for the construction of the vessel are currently being sought by the Natural Environment Research Council from five of the 30 shipyards that were originally sent an outline specification of requirements. Two of these five yards are in the United Kingdom. The tenders are due for return by 20 January 1989; an announcement will be made to the House about the placing of the contract in due course.

Animal Research Laboratories

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy on providing additional funds for the upgrading of standards in animal research laboratories when this is known to be the direct result of higher safety or other operating standards imposed by legislation;

(2) whether, in determining the funding requirements of animal research laboratories within the public sector, he will take into account any additional direct costs imposed

entirely as a consequence of enhanced security arrangements resulting from raids carried out on such laboratories with the object of disrupting, damaging or destroying their work.

Mr. Jackson: The total resources available for higher education and science are distributed taking into account the needs of individual institutions, but that distribution is not determined in detail by my Department.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many oral parliamentary questions he has answered by written reply because the question was not reached at Question Time, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since January 1988, a total of 541 oral parliamentary questions have received written replies.

ILEA Adult Education Service

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has regarding the number of pensioners who currently make use of the Inner London education authority adult education service.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are informed by the Inner London education authority that in the academic year 1987-88, a total of 31,837 people over 60 years of age and living in the authority's area attended ILEA adult education classes. Information is not available as to how many of these people had retired from work, nor as to the additional number of enrolments by people over 60 living outside the ILEA's area.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he estimates will be the effect on adult education within inner London of bringing the inner London education authority's adult education service into line with grant-related expenditure assessment levels.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for individual local education authorities to determine their provision and fee structure for adult education in the light of the resources available to them and their statutory responsibilities. This principle applies currently to ILEA and will apply to the inner London boroughs as education authorities from 1 April 1990.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Patrick Ryan

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has now reached a decision for the prosecution of Patrick Ryan under the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976 in Ireland.

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to the written answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 22 December 1988.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Attorney-General if he will seek to challenge the Irish Attorney-General's ruling on the extradition of Patrick Ryan in an Irish court; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As I told the House on 14 December 1988 in answer to the private notice question tabled by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), I found it singularly surprising that the Irish Attorney-General denied the application on the ground of fair trial. The very recent Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 does not provide that the Irish Attorney-General should satisfy himself on that score. There have been a number of commentaries in the Irish press questioning the legality of his decision. I am not persuaded, however, that the objective of securing the return of fugitive offenders would be served by my taking action in the Irish courts. The Government are making representations to the Irish Government concerning the forthcoming review of part III of the Extradition Act 1965, as amended by the 1987 Act.

Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1975

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General in how many cases the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1975 has been used in *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* Great Britain; and what are the numbers of those convicted or acquitted.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 19 December 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) at columns *94-96*. All the trials in the United Kingdom of cases pursuant to the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 in respect of offences allegedly committed in the Republic of Ireland have taken place in Northern Ireland.

Social Security Commissioners

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Attorney-General in how many cases leave to appeal to a social security commissioner was granted; and how many appeals were decided by the commissioner in each month since April 1987.

The Attorney-General: Leave to appeal to a social security commissioner may be granted by both chairmen of the lower tribunals and the commissioners. The figures requested are not readily available, but the Lord Chancellor's Department has prepared a best estimate of the figures requested on a quarterly basis based on information provided by the office of the social security commissioners, the office of the president of the social security appeals tribunal and the Department of Social Security.

England, Wales and Scotland

	Number of cases in which leave to appeal to a Social Security Commissioner was granted	*Number of appeals determined by a Social Security Commissioner*
1987		
April-June	597	650
July-September	583	609
October-December	612	550
1988		
January-March	761	692
April-June	733	656
July-September	810	695

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest quarterly recorded crime figures for Derbyshire by the differing categories of crime; and what are the comparable figures for the previous quarter over the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the following table.

Notifiable offences recorded by offence group in Derbyshire police force area

Number of offences

Year	*Total*	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offences*	*Burglary*	*Robbery*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*	*Other offences*
1983									
1st quarter	11,690	452	109	2,873	20	5,799	472	1,930	35
2nd quarter	12,181	541	128	2,660	24	6,160	499	2,116	53
3rd quarter	10,871	568	138	2,247	28	5,461	559	1,823	47
4th quarter	11,803	575	129	2,414	27	6,296	443	1,967	52
1984									
1st quarter	11,840	483	78	2,873	29	5,772	556	1,988	61
2nd quarter	13,274	543	218	2,725	22	6,698	625	2,407	36
3rd quarter	11,974	585	59	2,275	19	6,252	654	2,051	79
4th quarter	13,361	543	177	2,539	20	7,103	660	2,246	73
1985									
1st quarter	12,337	493	137	2,216	17	6,788	841	1,782	63
2nd quarter	12,685	566	84	2,563	24	6,585	538	2,272	53
3rd quarter	11,181	597	68	2,398	45	5,955	15	2,033	70
4th quarter	11,632	528	115	2,293	30	6,016	526	2,055	69
1986									
1st quarter	11,197	492	104	2,585	32	5,661	398	1,880	45
2nd quarter	12,223	546	137	2,487	26	6,376	404	2,172	75
3rd quarter	10,952	564	111	2,198	27	5,632	373	1,999	48
4th quarter	12,114	570	99	2,645	30	5,978	516	2,228	48
1987									
1st quarter	12,049	525	113	2,758	41	6,125	449	1,989	49
2nd quarter	12,076	597	115	2,532	27	6,270	404	2,084	47
3rd quarter	11,129	668	128	2,092	33	5,906	334	1,899	69
4th quarter	11,468	634	92	2,492	28	6,012	302	1,820	88
1988									
1st quarter	11,029	583	121	2,577	33	5,534	259	1,835	87
2nd quarter	10,611	677	84	2,068	19	5,452	245	1,988	78
3rd quarter	10,498	720	109	1,934	23	5,559	252	1,810	91

Explosives Find, Battersea

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the explosives find in Northcote rise, Battersea, on 21 December;

(2) if he will make a statement on the shooting incident in Chatham road, Battersea, on 21 December.

Mr. Hurd: At approximately 11.30 pm on Tuesday 20 December 1988 an 18-year-old man attempted to break into a Renault motor car which was parked in Northcote road, Battersea. He broke the window of the car having disturbed a man sleeping in the rear seat who then shot him in the stomach. The assailant ran off in the direction of nearby Staplehurst court. The police were called to the scene and the man was taken by ambulance to St. George's hospital, Tooting, was treated for his injuries and has since been discharged. Police inquiries established that the assailant had entered a ground floor flat in Staplehurst court but when armed officers later entered the flat they found the premises empty. It was immediately evident that the flat was being used as a bomb-making factory. An initial search revealed a considerable quantity of the explosive Semtex, other bomb-making equipment, and a number of weapons and ammunition.

Police inquiries revealed that two men had been living in the flat and that they had escaped. The two men remain at large and the Metropolitan police are continuing their efforts to find them with the co-operation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the An Garda Siochana. A man has been charged in connection with this investigation with conspiracy to cause explosions and withholding information about acts of terrorism.

The use of Semtex and the other equipment involved corresponds with previous finds of IRA explosives. There is no indication as yet of the means by which the explosives were brought into the country or their source.

Kincora Boys Home

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Sussex police as to all investigations conducted by the Sussex police into alleged paedophilic homosexual activities in the period between the appointment of Sir George Terry as chief constable of Sussex force and his assignments to investigate allegations relating to the Kincora boys home.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Mr. Albert Baker

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *720*, if he will provide details of the full review undertaken in February into the case of Mr. Albert Baker.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The review involved a full assessment of Mr. Baker's likely behaviour in prison in the event of his being transferred back to Northern Ireland. I do not think that it would be right to publish further details.

Security and Intelligence Services (Staff Counsellor)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to receive a report from the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and whether he will make it available to hon. Members.

(2) how many times since November 1987 he has met with the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and what items were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: The arrangements for the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services to report to me were set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 2 November 1987 at column *512*. There has been no change to those arrangements. It is not proposed that the staff counsellor's reports should be published or that details should be given about how he discharges his responsibilities.

Broadcasting

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the introduction of subscription fees for British Broadcasting Corporation television to be technologically feasible; and what technology he expects to be deployed.

Mr. Renton: The technology for subscription television is already available in some forms and the BBC has started a downloaded night hours subscription service, in conjunction with British Direct Television providing information for the medical profession. Other forms of subscription technology are still being developed.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what level he expects British Broadcasting Corporation subscription fees to be set; and whether there will be exceptions or reduced fees for *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* those on social security.

Mr. Renton: We envisage that the level of subscription fees will be for the BBC to determine, as will the decision whether or not to offer reduced fees to any category of subscriber.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what level of income he expects the British Broadcasting Corporation to raise by subscription in its first year of operation.

Mr. Renton: The extent and pace of the move towards subscription are a matter for the BBC to judge. The consequences for the level of the licence fee after April 1991 will be a matter for discussion with the Government as proposed in the White Paper.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the British Broadcasting Corporation will retain its public service broadcasting commitment after the introduction of subscriptions.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to our White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (November 1988, Cm 517), which makes clear our commitment to the continuation of the BBC as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the rate at which the technological costs of broadcasting are increasing.

Mr. Renton: A wide range of different technologies is used in broadcasting, some of which are mature and some still developing. Although we do not regularly monitor changes in their cost, it is likely that the position varies from one technology to another, depending partly on the stage of development which they have reached.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce safeguards to limit concentration of ownership of television stations.

Mr. Renton: Yes. Existing statutory safeguards are contained in the Broadcasting Act 1981 and the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. Paragraphs 6.48 to 6.53 of our recent White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (November 1988, Cm. 517) made clear our determination that ownership in the independent sector should be widely spread, and sought views on a number of principles on which ownership rules in the proposed legislation might be based.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make an announcement about the establishment of community radio stations.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend anounced on 2 November 1988 that he had approved a proposal by the Independent Broadcasting Authority to establish 20 incremental radio stations. We understand that they expect to announce their decisions on the first five stations in the spring.

Firearms

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will, as a matter of urgency, introduce regulations under the Firearms Act to prohibit the issuing of firearms licences to persons convicted of criminal offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no power for the Secretary of State to make such regulations. Under the Firearms Act 1968 there is already prohibition for life from possessing firearms or ammunition for persons sentenced to terms of three years or more in preventive detention, imprisonment, corrective training or youth custody. For sentences of three months or more but less than three years, there is a prohibition for five years from the date of release. Where an applicant for a firearm or shotgun certificate has convictions for lesser offences, it is for the chief officer of police to determine, in each case, whether these justify the refusal of a certificate. There is a right of appeal against a chief officer's decision, to the Crown Court.

Official Secrets Legislation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to satisfy the conditions of the Court of Human Rights for admissible restrictions on the freedom of expression in his proposals for new legislation on official secrets.

Mr. Hurd: I am satisfied that the Bill is fully consistent with the provisions of the European convention on human rights.

Armenia (British Rescue Squad)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will investigate complaints of indiscipline among some members of the British rescue squad recently despatched to Armenia; and what further action he proposes to take.

Mr. John Patten: The question of discipline in respect of London Fire Brigade officers is a matter for the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority. I understand from the chief fire officer that the officers concerned have denied the allegations made in the media and that this has been accepted by the chief officer.

Her Majesty's inspector of fire services who led the team of London Fire Brigade officers has also denied these allegations of indiscipline. We accept this and have no plans to take any further action.

Arrests

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest available figures for *(a)* total arrests, *(b)* the total population and *(c)* arrests on a percentage of the population in England.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 7 December 1988.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases there have been in the last 12 months of Home Office and immigration service officials withdrawing previously granted residence permits from people who had allegedly entered the country by deception or by some other illegal method; in how many of these cases the accused persons sought to challenge this allegation; how many made representations to the Minister's office via hon. Members; and in how many cases where the Home Office or immigration service's decision was so challenged these challenges were upheld and the allegation from the official dismissed.

Mr. Renton: In 1988, 2,120 persons given leave to enter by an immigration officer were subsequently treated as illegal entrants. The rest of the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Salisbury dated 14 November 1988 on the subject of accident and emergency services.

Mr. John Patten: A reply was sent on 4 January.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many oral parliamentary questions he has answered by written reply because the question was not reached at Question Time, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hurd: Of the 590 oral parliamentary questions answered by Home Office Ministers in 1988, 465 received written replies because they had not been reached at Question Time.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of arrests at each football league ground for each club per home match for *(a)* the last season and *(b)* the current season to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: For arrests last season I refer my hon. Friend to the reply from my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport to a question from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, East (Mr. Barnes) on 19 December 1988, columns *56-60*. The Association of Chief Police Officers does not yet have complete figures for each ground in the first part of this season, but the provisional total of arrests up to 31 October 1988 is:

	Arrests
Division 1	672
Division 2	540
Division 3	287
Division 4	543
Total	2,042

Naturalisation

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have applied for *(a)* naturalisation and *(b)* registration as British citizens in each of the last five years and in each of the last 12 months; and what number of applications have been granted in each of these periods.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The numbers of applications for citizenship received in the nationality division, and the numbers granted, are set out in the table. The figures in the table do not include applications awaiting preliminary processing in the registry, of which there were approximately 110,000 at the end of November 1988.

	Applications received		Applications granted[1]	
	Naturalisations	Registrations	Naturalisations	Registrations
1984	14,971	27,731	13,615	59,907
1985	18,815	33,756	14,978	38,407
1986	19,610	37,873	13,722	31,925
1987	22,695	57,322	18,376	46,233
1988				
January	2,305	11,752	1,518	5,855
February	1,899	9,327	1,115	4,855
March	2,540	14,848	1,077	4,193
April	5,351	4,911	1,101	3,811
May	2,264	3,258	1,294	3,943
June	873	3,309	1,517	3,492
July	827	4,859	1,434	2,730
August	698	9,741	1,088	1,849
September	1,816	10,802	1,018	3,046
October	1,318	13,256	1,032	4,215
November	3,211	18,836	1,195	6,662
December	not yet available			

[1] Statistics for 1988 are provisional.

Mr. Nigel Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he expects to reply to the response to the National Association of Probation Officers to his Green Paper "Punishment Custody and the Community"; and when he expects to meet officers of the Association to discuss the Green Paper.

Mr. John Patten: The Government will make its views known on the comments of the National Association of Probation Officers on the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community" when all such comments have been received and considered. The deadline for comments is 31 January. I have no immediate plans to meet members of NAPO again to discuss the Green Paper; I have met them on two occasions during 1988. They have promised further comments before the deadline and I await these with interest.

PRIME MINISTER

European Commission (Vice-President)

Q29. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her communications with the vice-president of the European Commission since his appointment on 1 January.

The Prime Minister: No.

Salmonella

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether the Government will compensate members of the public who have been poisoned by salmonella eggs and provide legal and other assistance for those who wish to claim damages against the egg producers in question.

The Prime Minister: No. Producers and suppliers of food owe a legal duty to care to the ultimate consumer of the food to ensure that the food is fit to eat. Those who have suffered food poisoning that is due to a breach of that duty by the producer or supplier would have a right to take action through the courts to obtain compensation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether the majority of egg production enterprises with more than 1,000 laying hens are completely free of salmonella; and if she will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing the number of such enterprises and the number of official veterinary inspections carried out in 1987 and to date.

The Prime Minister: In 1988, a total of 20 cases of salmonella enteritidis were reported under the Zoonoses Order 1975. There are around 38,500 enterprises in Great Britain of which 2,052 have over 1,000 laying birds. Since April 1988, all reports of salmonella enteritidis in laying hens have been investigated by veterinary officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will take steps to ensure that no egg farmer is paid compensation directly or indirectly in respect of lost egg sales unless she is satisfied that the undertaking in question has not sold contaminated eggs in 1987 and that the hen flocks are now completely free of salmonella.

The Prime Minister: No. To take selective action against producers who have reported salmonella in the past would create a disincentive to the reporting of such problems in the future.

Sir Alan Walters

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Prime Minister when Sir Alan Walters will resume his duties as her economic adviser.

The Prime Minister: Sir Alan Walters is likely to return to public service around the middle of this year. The terms on which he will return are still under discussion.

Engagements

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Security Services (Staff Counsellor)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many times since November 1987 she has met the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and what items were discussed;

(2) when she next expects to receive a report from the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and whether she will make it available to hon. Members.

The Prime Minister: I set out the arrangements for the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services to report to me in my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 2 November 1987 at column *512*. There has been no change to those arrangements. It is not proposed that the staff counsellor's reports should be published or that details should be given about how he discharges his responsibilities.

Emergency Services

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy towards privatisation of emergency services dealing with accidents; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no plans to change the basis on which these important services are currently provided.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what amounts for bad debts have been allowed for by her office in calculating the total costs of her visits abroad given in answers to questions by right hon. and hon. Members during the past three years.

The Prime Minister: No provision for bad debts has been made when calculating these costs.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will instruct her office to clear up all outstanding debts owed by media organisations for the cost of sending their representatives with her on overseas visits.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that the arrangements in force in my office for pursuing outstanding invoices operate effectively.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister why she will not identify those media organisations which have not settled their accounts for expenses arising from their representatives accompanying her on overseas visits; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 8 December 1988 at column *267*.

Air Crash (Lockerbie)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister how many *(a)* heads of State and *(b)* Heads of Government contacted her to express sympathy following the air disaster at Lockerbie.

The Prime Minister: I have received over 25 messages of sympathy from Heads of State and Heads of Government following the tragic disaster at Lockerbie.

Parliamentary Answers (Cost)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister whether the level of £250 as the normal cost ceiling for the answering of a parliamentary question includes specific or notional staff costs arising from administration, research and delivery of the answer; and if she will provide an analysis of the costs associated with the answering of this question.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave on 28 July 1988 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) at columns *497-98*. It is not the practice to give an analysis of the costs of individual parliamentary questions.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister who determines the cost level beyond which a parliamentary question is referred to the responsible Minister before significant resources are committed; and what changes have been recorded in the cost levels, expressed at 1979 prices.

The Prime Minister: The cost level is kept under review by Her Majesty's Treasury. It was originally set at £50 in 1965, increased to £200 in 1982 and then further increased to £250 in 1988 to reflect increases in costs.

Electors

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to require the Boundary Commissions to equalise the number of electors per constituency in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Home Affairs Select Committee considered the disparities in the average electorates in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in its report on the redistribution of seats (2nd Report, 1986-87). The Committee decided to make no recommendation aimed at rectifying these disparities and the Government accepted that conclusion.

Minister for Sport

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Prime Minister why the office of Minister for Sport is included within the Department of the Environment; and if she will set out in the *Official Report* the environmental considerations which the Minister for Sport is expected to take into account.

The Prime Minister: Since 1969 successive Governments have considered the appropriate location for

the office of the Minister for Sport to be the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and subsequently, on its creation, the Department of the Environment. The Minister is, of course, responsible to the Secretary of State for the Environment. All Government funding specifically allocated to sport is channelled through the Sports Council. The Sports Council's priorities are determined by its royal charter.

Security Service Bill (Warrant Provisions)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her policy on any future application of the warrant provisions of clause 3 of the Security Service Bill to the property of right hon. and hon. Members.

The Prime Minister: If hon. Members have particular issues to raise, they should pursue them during further proceedings on the Bill.

Tourism

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will ensure that matters relating to tourism in Scotland and Wales are included in the current review of tourism policies.

The Prime Minister: The review is taking into account matters relating to tourism policy for Great Britain as a whole, in which the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales clearly have an interest. I have no plans to broaden the review to include the arrangements for tourism for which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are specifically responsible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC (Luxembourg Agreement)

Mr. Buckley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will state the occasions when the Luxembourg agreement has been invoked at any meeting of the European Council or Council of Ministers since July 1987.

Mrs. Chalker: Greece invoked the Luxembourg compromise in the Agriculture Council on 17 June 1988.

Security Services (Staff Counsellor)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when he expects to receive a report from the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and whether he will make it available to hon. Members;

(2) how many times since November 1987 he has met the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and what items were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The arrangements for the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services to report to me were set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycome (Mr. Whitney) on 2 November 1987. There has been no change to those arrangements. It is not proposed that the staff counsellor's reports should be published or that details should be given about how he discharges his responsibilities.

Visa Applications

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1988, *Official Report*, column *310*, he will give the reasons for the level of refusals of entry clearance applications made in Jamaica in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Prior entry clearance for Jamaicans wishing to visit the United Kingdom is not mandatory and the majority travel without an entry certificate. Those applying for entry clearance at the High Commissions in Kingston tend to be the less straightforward cases many of whom are unable to meet the requirements of the immigration rules. Some 31,600 Jamaicans were admitted to the United Kingdom in 1987; 269 were refused leave to enter.

Malawi

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total value of orders placed with United Kingdom companies for services and goods for Malawi in the last year; and and if he will list them.

Mrs. Chalker: The total value of visible exports from the United Kingdom to Malawi for the 12 months to 30 November 1988 was £26·4 million. Figures for exports of services are not available.

Information on individual orders is not available, with the exception of orders placed by Crown Agents with United Kingdom firms using aid funds. In calendar year 1988 the total value of these orders was £1,712,208 and of orders placed directly by the ODA, £31,771·92. I will send the hon. Member the detailed information available.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions since July 1988 when representatives of Her Majesty's Government in the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community were given notice by the presidency of that body to reach either a common policy or find agreement on a legislative proposal at less than one week's notice, together with details of the respective proposals, meetings and periods of notice given.

Mrs. Chalker: The presidency has, in accordance with the rules of procedure, circulated provisional agendas for each council meeting to the other members of the Council and to the Commission at least 14 days before the date of each meeting. Exceptions to this procedure can be made only by unanimous agreement of the Council.

A detailed analysis of all agenda items considered at more than 30 Council meetings could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present three meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned in January.

The Agriculture Council will be held on 23 January. It is likely that the following subjects will be discussed: income aids, reform of the beef (and possibly also the sheepmeat) regime, milk quotas, agrimonetary questions, aid to small cereals producers, tree nuts and possibly the labelling of spirit drinks. The Commission is also expected to introduce its 1989 price-fixing proposals.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 23/24 January will include a review of the dispute with the United States on hormones, preparations for the EC/ACP Council of Ministers meeting in Brazzaville on 16/17 February at which negotiations on a successor to the present Lomé convention will continue, and discussion of relations with the Council of Europe. There will also be further discussion of new financial protocols for Cyprus and Malta.

The Internal Market Council on 30 January will discuss further measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

Hong Kong (Endangered Species)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made by the Hong Kong authorities in legislation following their review of measures designed to enforce their responsibilities under the convention on international trade in endangered species; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong authorities have concluded that the following changes to existing Hong Kong legislation are desirable:

(i) To increase maximum fines by five times.
(ii) To tighten up transit requirements.
(iii) To ban the import, export and possession of medicinal products purporting to contain rhinoceros ingredients.
(iv) To make it an offence for persons to give false information when applying for endangered species licences.
(v) To overcome certain indentification difficulties by accepting labels and accompanying documents as evidence for prosecution.
(vi) To extend the power of search to cover any offence committed under the ordinance.
(vii) To empower the Government to release live endangered species or dispose of perishable specimens before relevant cases come to court.

Proposals to effect these changes will be included in a draft Bill which the Hong Kong Government intend to introduce into the Legislative Council during its present session.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many seizures of illegally imported endangered species were made by the Hong Kong authorities in the second six months period of 1988; how many seizures were made of similar categories intended for export; and if he will give details of all seizures made.

Mr. Eggar: During the second six-month period of 1988 the Hong Kong authorities made 186 seizures. Details of the seizures are:

Species/Parts	*Quantity*	
	Illegal import	*Illegal possession*
Felidae (Cats):		
Stuffed	1	
Skin	7 pieces	4 pieces and 7·3 kg scraps
Deer Antlers:	110 kg	400 kg
Musk Pod:	1·5 kg	0·25 kg
Elephant:		
Skin	23 pieces	17 pieces
Ivory	1,205 kg	—
Monkeys:	—	2
Rhinoceros:		
Horn	—	1·5 kg
Hide	—	0·5 kg
Pangolin:		
Meat	33·4 kg	—
Birds of Prey/Owl	15	—
Meat	0·4 kg	—
Parrots:	12	—
Reptiles:	409 pieces	—
Skins	3	—
Sea Turtle:	26	4
Giant Salamander:	8	5
Asiatic Bony Tongue:		
Fish	4	—
American Ginseng:	2·6 kg	—

There were no seizures in respect of intended export.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many restaurant inspections were carried out by the Hong Kong authorities in the second six-month period of 1988 to ensure that no rare or engangered species of animals and plants were offered for sale as food; and if any seizures were made.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong authorities carried out 170 inspections of restaurants during this period. Two sea turtles were seized during these inspections.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the operation to date of the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance (Replacement of Schedules) Order 1988 made by the Hong Kong Executive Council on 26 July 1988 in respect of the import of elephant tusks.

Mr. Eggar: The Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance (Replacement of Schedules) Order 1988 came into effect on 5 August 1988. It extended the import control of ivory to all worked items. Up to 7 January 1989, 39 shipments totalling 510 kg of worked ivory items have been seized. During the same period, 133 shipments totalling 4,752 kg of worked ivory from CITES approved sources have been imported under valid licences.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on whether the ban by the Hong Kong Government on

the internal sale of medicinal products containing rhino horn will also include a ban on the export of such products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The proposed ban on medicinal products claiming to contain rhinoceros horn ingredients will cover their import, possession and export.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many prosecutions were initiated by the Hong Kong authorities in 1988 arising from illegal imports, exports and possession of endangered species.

Mr. Eggar: Two hundred and ninety eight.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any auctions are impending in Hong Kong of animal tusks, skins and antlers seized by the authorities.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong authorities will shortly seek tenders for the sale of certain confiscated items which are permitted for commercial trade under CITES. These items include elephant tusks, skins of felidae (cat), reptiles, chinchilla and others, and deer antlers.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress made by the Hong Kong Government in banning the internal sale of medicinal products containing rhino horn.

Mr. Eggar: The necessary legislation is being drafted for introduction into the Hong Kong Legislative Council during its present session.

Niger (Illegal Hunting)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Saudi Arabia regarding illegal hunting by Saudi nationals in Niger; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. This is a matter for the Government of Niger.

Aircraft (Sabotage Threats)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department was notified in December 1988 of possible sabotage threats to Pan Am flights from Europe to the United States.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any notices of possible sabotage threats to aircraft flights were issued to diplomatic staff in December 1988 which were not also available to the travelling public.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Fauna, Flora and Habitats (Protection)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the provisions of the draft European Community directive on the protection of fauna, flora and habitats extends to Gibraltar.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Rescue Teams

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he will consider proposing international action to improve the level of training and co-ordination of rescue teams dispatched to major disasters, in the light of recent experience in Armenia;

(2) if he has any plans to improve the level of training, co-ordination and equipment for British rescue teams, in the light of recent experience in the earthquake rescue operation in Armenia.

Mr. Chris Patten: The expertise of the relief teams in Armenia was impressive and they had the best equipment that they could take with them. Co-ordination was in the hands of the Soviet authorities. But I am considering all aspects of the international relief operation to see whether lessons can be learnt for future emergencies.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Aid)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table listing the total amount in constant 1988 prices of all United Kingdom official aid flown to sub-Saharan Africa from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total amount of aid given by Her Majesty's Government to sub-Saharan Africa in 1979 and 1988, or the latest year for which figures are now available in constant 1988 prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa from 1979 to 1987, at 1987 prices, was as follows:

	£ million
1979	386
1980	369
1981	379
1982	296
1983	271
1984	287
1985	310
1986	280
1987	284

Figures for 1988 are not yet available.

Armenia (Earthquake)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will give a breakdown of how the £5 million aid to Armenian earthquake victims will be spent.

Mr. Chris Patten: Some £1·4 million has been allocated so far, in response to specific requests from the Soviet authorities for assistance with emergency relief and search and rescue measures. This has included:

(a) 12 relief flights carrying tents, clothing, medical supplies, food and heavy earthmoving equipment, in collaboration with the British Red Cross Society;

(b) a team of four London firemen with specialist search equipment;
(c) a team of eight Manchester doctors specialising in crush injury treatment;
(d) a contribution to a food parcel programme by CARE Britain:
(e) supply and transport of containers to move donated clothes and equipment to Soviet provided ships;
(f) supply of heaters for prefabricated housing.

The remaining £3·6 million will be used for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to provide new aid in support of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference.

Mr. Chris Patten: We shall continue to give the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) our full support. I have, for example, just approved a further £15 million contribution for the Limpopo railway rehabilitation project. I plan to attend the SADCC annual conference in Luanda in February 1989.

Animal Conservation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total amount spent by his Department in each of the last five years on schemes in support of animal conservation.

Mrs. Chalker: Total expenditure on animal conservation is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Records are available for expenditure in the last three years under the Overseas Development Administration's joint funding scheme with British voluntary agencies. The following projects aimed at conserving wildlife habitats have been supported:

	1986-87 Actual £	*1987-88 Actual* £	*1988-89 Projected* £
Cameroon			
Korup national park	80,500	140,000	205,000
Mount Oku mountain forest	—	—	35,000
Liberia			
Sapo park	—	—	35,000
Zambia			
Wetlands	—	—	50,000
Nepal			
Annapurna protected area	—	—	14,750

In addition, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development told the hon. Member on 19 October 1988, at column *857*, wildlife conservation has been supported under the bilateral aid programme in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Other ODA assistance includes vehicles for a game park in Tanzania and an expert for the King Mahendra Trust which promotes conservation in Nepal.

United Nations

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many member states of the United Nations organisation are democracies.

Mr. Eggar: Under the United Nations charter membership of the United Nations, in addition to and including founder members, is open to all peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present charter and, in the judgment of the organisation, are able and willing to carry them out. The United Nations does not attempt to categorise its members as democracies or otherwise.

ENVIRONMENT

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has initiated any evaluation of the eight-point plan put forward to halt the global warming greenhouse effect, presented by Dr. Robert Goodlad to the major project and the environment conference at the Royal Geographical Society on 14 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Most of the points raised by Dr. Goodlad have already been addressed in the Government's response to the Brundtland report, "Our Common Future" and in my noble Friend's message to the Toronto conference, "The Changing Atmosphere", copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. The Government are giving full support to the UNEP/WMO inter-government panel on climate change, including leading the science review working group, as the most important means of seeking a way forward on an issue which must be tackled internationally.

Football Clubs (Membership Schemes)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what comments he has received from the Police Federation regarding compulsory identity cards for football supporters.

Mr. Moynihan: I met the chairman and representatives of the Police Federation on 15 December and had a helpful discussion about the proposal for a national membership scheme for football supporters. It was agreed that further meetings would be held as the detail of the scheme is worked out.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many football supporters he estimates will apply for identity cards should the proposed legislation on identity cards for football supporters be enacted.

Mr. Moynihan: I hope that every genuine football supporter, regular or casual will recognise the benefits of the national membership scheme and apply for membership.

Pollution (Safety Standards)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safety standards are laid down to minimise health risks to the public from polluted rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

Mr. Moynihan: Rivers and estuaries are already subject to classification schemes which incorporate standards relating to amenity and uses for the waters concerned. These schemes are being reviewed as part of the Government's proposals to introduce a statutory framework of water quality objectives for rivers and estuaries.

Contact Pursuits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the last national survey was carried out regarding the suitability of United Kingdom inland waters for contact pursuits; and whether a survey is planned for the near future.

Mr. Moynihan: There has been no national survey of inland waters with respect to their suitability for contact pursuits; nor are there plans for one. Monitoring of rivers is currently a matter for the water authorities but will, under our privatisation proposals, become one of the main functions of the National Rivers Authority.

Radon Radiation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the national average of Radon radiation concentrations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A national survey carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board found an average concentration of 20·5 becquerels per cubic metre of air in dwellings.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the design level for buildings in a Radon radiation area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's advisers on radiological protection matters, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB), recommended that exposure to radon daughters in the home should be limited to 5 millisieverts a year. The design level, which was recommended by the NRPB, reflects international consensus on this matter as well as the views of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

Control of Pollution

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has inspected the site used by contractors acting on behalf of Tesco Stores at Petersfinger near Salisbury.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution has not inspected the site but is aware of the situation. The matter is one for local planning and waste authorities, both of which are taking the necessary action.

The Orphanage, Watford

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the selling price and method of valuation for the sale of The Orphanage, Watford to Heron Homes.

Mr. Chope: The Orphanage, Watford is not owned by the Department of the Environment or by any Government Department. A leasehold interest held by the Department of the Environment expired on 25 December 1988.

East Thameside (Housing)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretry of State for the Environment what account he will take of the observations of London borough councils on the study by Messrs. Coopers and Lybrand on the east Thameside housing and of the strategic implications of any of the site schemes on transport, education and other personal services.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend is taking careful account of the comments received from the London boroughs.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the properties and housing units designated as affordable on each of the sites in the London borough of Newham considered in the east Thameside housing study, stating the approximate level of income required under current conditions to purchase two bedroom affordable accommodation.

Mr. Trippier: The study considered general price levels of houses of varying types at the lower end of the east London owner-occupier market. It was not required to designate specific properties or dwellings within the study areas as affordable.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the density in both habitable rooms per acre and persons per acre in each of the sites in the London borough of Newham reported on in the east Thameside housing study, together with comparable figures approved by him applicable to public and private housing, respectively, within the area of the modified Beckton district plan.

Mr. Trippier: The consultants were asked to consider standard densities for housing and development at Stratford rail yards, Beckton gas works and the lower Lea valley of approximately 90, 100, and 120 habitable rooms per acre net respectively—not densities on the basis of persons per acre.

My right hon. Friend is not required to approve the modified Beckton local plan.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet received the report from the Nature Conservancy Council on the desirability and feasibility of privatising the 109 national nature reserves currently owned or part owned by the Nature Conservancy Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received the report of the Nature Conservancy Council's review of national nature reserves at the end of December. The report is now under consideration and a further announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), *Official Report*, 2 December 1988, column *424*, if he will list the reasons why the 117 sites of special scientific interest, reported by the Nature Conservancy Council in its 14th annual report as having been damaged, were not protected from potentially damaging operations; and how many of these cases have resulted in legal proceedings being taken against alleged offenders.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the main specific causes of damage were as follows:

	Number
Third party operators (including works outside an SSSI)	43
Resulting from, or ancillary to, planning permissions	14
Works under Channel Tunnel Act 1988	2
Emergency electrical repairs	1
Unforeseen consequences of pre-1981 nature reserve agreement	1
Miscellaneous operations	56

Many of the latter cases will have involved unwitting damage although in six cases the NCC has initiated legal proceedings.

As the NCC's annual report makes clear, in 79 cases the damage to the SSSI was only short term, from which the site may be expected to recover. This may also apply where a site has suffered long-term damage. In only 11 cases was the damage severe enough to result in the denotification of part of the SSSI.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cars provided for the Secretary of State for Scotland and Ministers in his Department are capable of taking unleaded petrol; and how many of them still take leaded petrol only.

Mr. Chope: The Government car service currently provides three official cars to the Scottish Office which are allocated as follows:

Secretary of State—Rover 820 SE
Ministers of State—Austin Rover Montego
Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State—Austin Rover Montego

The Rover 820 SE is capable of running on lead-free petrol. Both Montegos are capable of running only on leaded fuel and cannot be converted. The older of the Montegos is to be replaced this month by a Montego capable of running on unleaded petrol and I hope that the other Montego will be replaced later this year.

Bellwin Scheme

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a delegation from the north east Derbyshire district council to explore the possibilities of their receiving financial assistance towards the cost of putting out the underground fire at Callywhite lane, Dronfield under the terms of the Bellwin scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Bellwin scheme is intended to make available special financial assistance to local authorities to meet expenditure incurred in the immediate aftermath of an emergency to protect life or property. The underground fire in Dronfield had been burning for three years before any action was taken and it cannot be regarded as an emergency under the scheme. Furthermore the courts have established that liability for the fire rests with the landowners, from whom costs could be recovered.

Computerisation

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities who have computerised their search facilities for home buyers.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not collected centrally. However, I understand that Plymouth and Portsmouth city councils and Wigan metropolitan borough council have computerised their search facilities, and that a number of other authorities are currently exploring the possibility.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the chandeliers within the Palace of Westminster which survived the bombing in 1941 are of the same size and design as those which hung in the Chamber and which were destroyed.

Mr. Chope: I hope that it will be possible to answer this question when the investigations referred to in my reply to the hon. Member's question of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *523*, have been completed.

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the cleaning and restoration of the Victoria Tower is to be completed.

Mr. Chope: The restoration, repair and cleaning of the stonework of the Palace of Westminster is being carried out in a number of phases. The current phase, covering the Central Lobby Tower, is scheduled for completion towards the end of the year. Work on the Victoria Tower is scheduled to start early in 1990 and will take about two and a half years to complete.

Council Housing (Sales)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the council housing stock as at 1 January 1980 had been sold under the right to buy legislation by the latest available date in *(a)* each district of Somerset, *(b)* each district of Devon, *(c)* each district of Dorset, *(d)* each district of Wiltshire, *(e)* the London borough of Camden, *(f)* the London borough of Islington, *(g)* the London borough of Lambeth, *(h)* the London borough of Southwark, *(i)* Birmingham, *(j)* Manchester, *(k)* Bradford, *(l)* Leeds, *(m)* Sheffield, *(n)* Nottingham and *(o)* Bristol.

Mr. Trippier: A table giving the available figures up to June 1988, as reported by each English local authority, has been placed in the Library.

Medicinal Leech (Protection)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites in the United Kingdom which meet the criteria for designation as special protection areas for the medicinal leech, Hirudo medicinalis, under the draft Fauna, Flora and Habitats directive; and if he will list the provisions which already exist for the protection of this species and its habitat.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council has notified as sites of special scientific interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 eight sites at which the medicinal leech has been recorded since 1960. These are:

Dungeness
New Forest
Moccas park
Walland marsh

Bookham (Surrey)
Cors Goch
Ardmore, Kildalton and Callumkill woodlands
Clais Dhearg

Other sites may be designated in due course.

The medicinal leech as a species was afforded full protection in Great Britain from March 1988 by its inclusion in schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedules) Order 1988. International trade in the medicinal leech is regulated by inclusion in appendix 2 of the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

It would be premature to speculate on what criteria for habitat and species protection might eventually be included in an agreed EC directive on habitat protection.

Hayle Harbour

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether an article 10 direction under the Town and Country Planning General Development order 1977 is currently in force in respect of the future development of Hayle harbour, Cornwall.

Mr. Chope: No.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will investigate the likely impact of the proposals contained in the Hayle Harbour Bill on *(a)* the Hayle estuary site of special scientific interest, *(b)* the hydrology of the estuary and *(c)* the ecology of Copperhouse creek and pools; and if he will consider the likely impact on the environment resulting from the increase in recreational use of the area resulting from the proposed development.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand the promoters of this private Bill are preparing an environmental impact assessment. The Nature Conservancy Council, which is statutorily responsible for all negotiations on matters affecting sites of special scientific importance, are in consultation with the promoters on this and the hydrology of the estuary and Copperhouse pools.

Local Authorities (Economic Development)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the economic development initiatives announced in his answer to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 21 December will affect facilities available under the city grant initiative for deficit funding.

Mr. Trippier: No. City grant, which is paid directly by my Department to private sector developers meets the shortfall between the market value and the capital costs of appropriate private sector development projects. It does not cover a company's trading deficits or running costs.

Toxic Waste (Exports)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the export of toxic waste from Britain by other national governments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Scheduled Monuments (Damage)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many scheduled monuments have been damaged in each of the last five years as a result of each of the following activities: *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* forestry, *(c)* activities given planning permission, *(d)* activities of statutory undertakers and other public bodies not included in *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)*, *(e)* recreation activities and *(f)* miscellaneous activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have asked the chairman of English Heritage to provide the hon. Member with such information as is readily available for England. Information on monuments in Wales and Scotland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland respectively.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many oral parliamentary questions he has answered by written reply because the question was not reached at Question Time, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ridley: The total number of oral parliamentary questions answered by written reply during the last 12 months was 597.

Protection of Birds

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many seabirds have been affected by the oil pollution in the Channel caused by dumping or cleaning in early January 1989; who was responsible for the pollution; and what support has been given by Her Majesty's Government to organisations involved in rescuing the birds.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is too early to assess the full impact of the oil pollution in the Channel on sea birds. Oiled birds are continuing to come ashore. It may not yet be possible properly to assess the damage caused to sea bird populations. The Department of Transport is investigating the incident, but it has not been possible to identify the cause of the oil slick.

The organisations which are most involved in rescuing the birds are the RSPCA and the RSPB. Neither body has asked for Government assistance.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many licences for the killing of dark-bellied brent geese have been issued by his Department in the past three years; and how many birds have been slaughtered;

(2) what efforts are made by his Department to sponsor the setting aside by farmers of special feeding grounds for geese and other crop-eating birds.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food issues licences permitting the killing of limited numbers of dark-bellied brent geese as an aid to scaring operations to protect crops from serious damage. The position is reviewed each year and advice is taken from the Nature Conservancy Council.

The geese overwinter during the period October to March and details of licences issued and numbers killed during the last three seasons in England are given in the table. No licences are issued in either Scotland or Wales.

Licences Issued

Season	*Number*	*Maximum number of geese permitted to be shot*	*Number of geese shot*
1985-86	89	1,095	932
1986-87	72	1,200	550
1987-88	56	970	399
Total	217	3,265	1,881

Family Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the number of *(a)* married couples living in households headed by another adult, and *(b)* single-parent families living in households headed by another adult, according to local authority housing investment programme returns, for 1979 and the latest year available.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The estimates requested for 1988 are given in columns B3A1 (married couple) and B3B1 (lone parent) of the "HIP1 all items print" which is available in the Library. No comparable estimates were collected in 1979.

Homelessness

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities in 1979 and in the latest year available;

(2) what estimate he has for the number of people homeless in England other than those accepted as such by local authorities for the purposes of the Homeless Persons Act 1977 in 1979 and for the latest year available.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The estimated numbers of households for whom English local authorities accepted responsibility to secure accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act were 57,200 in 1979 and 112,400 in 1987. However, because of changes in the reporting system in 1980 and 1982, the figure for 1979 is not strictly comparable with those for later years.

In addition authorities reported 56,000 homeless households in 1987 to whom they gave advice and assistance but for whom they did not accept responsibility for securing accommodation. Comparable estimates are not available for 1979.

Offensive Trades

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the list of offensive trades that are registered with his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Offensive trades are not registered with this Department. Those that require local authority consent under the Public Health Act 1936 are listed in schedule 14 of the Local Government Act 1972. In addition, a local authority by an order under section 107(1)(b)(ii) of the 1936 Act, confirmed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and published in accordance with his directions, may declare any other trade, business or manufacture to be an offensive trade in the whole or part of its district.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many premises which carried out offensive trade operations have been closed down since 1974; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many premises are used for the carrying out of offensive trades and if he will make a statement;

(3) what informaton he has as to how many premises operating offensive trades are in breach of the consents granted to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* This information is not available.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the statutory powers relating to the control of the emission of smells by ofensive trade operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* These powers are contained in part III of the Public Health Act 1936 and are as follows:

(i) Sections 92 to 100 of the 1936 Act enable a local authority to take action for the abatement of smell nuisance caused by offensive trades.

(ii) Section 107 of that Act requires the consent of the local authority to be obtained to the establishment of an offensive trade.

(iii) Section 108 of that Act enables a local authority to make byelaws with respect to offensive trades in their district.

A consultation paper published in December 1986 proposed that the provisions mentioned at (ii) and (iii) above should be replaced by a new system under which the establishment of an offensive trade would require the prior consent of the local authority. The consent would include details of the best practicable means to be used for controlling odour nuisance. A further consultation paper published in December 1988 contained a suggested definition of the trades which would require such consent.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he gives to local authorities about prosecution of managers of offensive trade operations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Departmental circular 43/76 issued on 7 May 1976 gives advice on how to deal with smell nuisance including local authorities' powers of prosecution of offenders under section 100 of the Public Health Act 1936.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has issued any guidelines for members of the public to register complaints against existing operators of an offensive trade.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* No specific guidance has been issued. The Department's circular No. 43/76 on "Control of Smells From the Animal Waste Processing Industry" advises local authorities to consider the establishment of community liaison committees which will include representatives of residents in the area where there are particular premises which create odour problems.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he intends to seek to amend the appropriate legislation relating to offensive trades which are creating smells; and if he will make a statement;

(2) under what circumstances he proposes that the requirement of prior consent will apply to people who operate in the offensive trade industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* In a consultation document issued in December 1986 entitled "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain—Review and Proposals," it was proposed that any person wishing to establish any trade deemed to be an offensive trade will require the prior consent of the local authority.

A further consultation paper published in December 1988 contained a suggested change in the definition of trades which would require such consent. These are trade in which:

(a) any animal, bird, fish or vegetable matter is processed, stored, or dried through the application of heat, for trade or profit in a manner which is likely to give rise to the evolution of offensive substances or odours, subject to the exclusion of:—
  (i) plants for the manufacture of pet foods;
  (ii) plants for the manufacture of food or drinks for human consumption;
  (iii) activities taking place on a farm not involving the manufacture of a product for sale; or

(b) the breeding of maggots from putrescible matter is carried out.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals he has received from owners of offensive trade plants where prior consents have been refused by the inspectorate or a local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* None. Appeals where prior consent has been refused by a local authority are made to a magistrates court under section 107(4) of the Public Health Act 1936. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is not involved in issuing prior consents under the present system.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received from local authorities about offensive trades asking him to amend the relevant legislation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what responses he has received to the consultation paper published in December 1986 on the review of air pollution controls in Great Britain, with particular reference to the offensive trades and emission of smells into the air; and if he will make these responses available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The responses received on these matters, including representations made by local authorities, are summarised in "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain—Follow-up to Consultation Paper issued in December 1986" published by the Department on 15 December 1988. A copy of this document has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

City Grant

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is considering any alterations to the priority areas for city grant.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* We have it in mind to look again at the list of priority areas for my Department's inner city programmes, including city grant, in the course of next year.

Mink Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what rates are payable on mink farms; and what are the arrangements for these establishments after the introduction of the uniform business rate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Mink farms are currently liable for general rates and will be liable for the business rate from 1 April 1990.

Destroyed Chickens (Disposal)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been given to local authorities concerning the disposal of destroyed chickens.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* HM inspectorate of pollution has not issued general guidance concerning the disposal of destroyed chickens.

Local waste disposal authorities are best placed to offer advice on the availability of waste disposal facilities for animal carcasses.

HM inspectorate of pollution, as always, is prepared to assist if requested.

Irish Sea (Pollution)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites have received consent to discharge any of the following substances into the Irish sea for the year 1987-88: (i) phosphate, (ii) arsenic, (iii) lead, (iv) nickel, (v) chromium, (vi) zinc, (vii) manganese, (viii) cadmium, (ix) copper, (x) uranium, (xi) fluoride, (xii) mercury, (xiii) halogenated hydrocarbons, (xiv) pcb's, (xv) organo chlorines, (xvi) dioxins, and (xvii) organo phosphates.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department collects information on discharges of a limited number of these substances in connection with the reporting requirements of European Community directives. The number of sites known to be discharging these substances into the Irish sea and its tidal estuaries is as follows:

cadmium—12 sites
mercury—five sites
halogenated hydrocarbons: carbon tetrachloride—one site
organochlorines: HCH, DDT, PCP—no sites.

Information on discharges of the other substances listed is not held centrally. The public registers maintained by water authorities in England and Wales, river purification boards in Scotland and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland contain details of all authorised discharges of sewage and trade effluent.

Sports Council

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of the policy document of the Sports Council entitled "Sport in the Community—The Next Ten Years".

Mr. Moynihan: A copy of "Sport in the Community —The Next Ten Years" was sent by the Sports Council to my predecessor when it was published in 1982.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he complied with his

undertaking in line 13 of column 1294, *Official Report*, 16 December, to draw to the attention of the Sports Council the need not to involve itself in unpopular schemes that are damaging to the environment; when he expects a reply from the Sports Council; and if he will copy the correspondence to the hon. Member for Twickenham.

Mr. Moynihan: I wrote to the members of the Sports Council on 5 January. The hon. Member received a copy of the letters.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in the light of his statement in the *Official Report*, 16 December, column 1292, he has received notification from the Sports Council that a final decision has been taken on the Teddington floodlight scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council is not required to notify the Department of decisions to grant aid projects of this size, but I understand that the council gave approval to a grant of £100,000 towards the project on 9 January.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following his undertaking to convey the contents to the chairman of the Sports Council, he will make it his policy to seek from the Sports Council a full reply to the speech of the hon. Member for Twickenham in the Adjournment debate on 16 December.

Mr. Moynihan: No. I replied to the Adjournment debate on 16 December.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when, following his undertaking in line 2, column 1294, *Official Report* 16 December, he personally sent a copy of the 16 December Adjournment debate to each member of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: My letters of 5 January to the members of the Sports Council enclosed a copy of the *Hansard* record of the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government accept the policy of the Sports Council in its policy document, "Sports in the Community—The Next Ten Years", with specific reference to the interests and the needs of non-users.

Mr. Moynihan: "Sport in the Community—The Next Ten Years" was published by the Sports Council in 1982. The Sports Council, which was established by royal charter, is independent of the Government.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice has been given to the Sports Council with regard to the extent to which it should take into consideration the environmental impact of projects which it supports; and if he will make a statement in the light of the Sports Council's own declared policy to take into account the interests of non-users.

Mr. Moynihan: It is for the Sports Council to decide whether or not to give grant aid to a project in the light of all the relevant information available.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what form the provision of funding for the Sports Council is laid before Parliament; at what intervals; and when this is next due to take place.

Mr. Moynihan: Parliament is informed of the funding requirements for the Sports Council through the Autumn Statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, through the public expenditure White Paper and through the normal Supply procedure.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report* the length of time for which the chairman, the vice-chairman and the members of the Sports Council are appointed; and if he will give the dates to which the current appointments are to run in each case.

Mr. Moynihan: The chairman of the Sports Council is appointed for a term not exceeding five years. The vice-chairman and the other members are appointed for terms not exceeding three years. In all cases they are eligible for re-appointment. The terms of office of the current members of the council expire on the following dates:

	Date
John Smith *(chairman)*	19 May 1989
Sebastian Coe *(vice-chairman)*	9 July 1989
J. Allan Patmore *(vice-chairman)*	31 August 1990
Raymond Miquel	15 November 1991
John Powell	31 March 1990
Ron Emes	9 March 1990
Richard Fox	27 October 1991
Margaret Hohman	27 October 1991
Norman Jacobs	27 October 1991
Tim Marshall	27 October 1991
Charles Palmer	27 November 1989
Mary Peters	27 October 1991
David Simon	27 October 1991
Peter Yarranton	27 October 1991

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many communications he received from the Sports Council board members or officials concerning the Teddington floodlight scheme; and if he will list them by date.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has received one letter from the Sports Council concerning the Teddington floodlight scheme dated 2 December 1988.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will extend his undertaking personally to convey to every member of the Sports Council the views put by the hon. Member for Twickenham in the Adjournment debate on 16 December to every member of the London Regional Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: The chairman of the London Council for Sport and Recreation is a member of the Sports Council. I made him aware of the hon. Member's concerns in my letter of 5 January. It is for him to convey this to other members of the London Council for Sport and Recreation.

Football Clubs (Membership Scheme)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exclude from the ambit of proposed legislation involving identity cards for football supporters clubs at which there were no arrests during the 1987-88 season.

Mr. Moynihan: No. To exempt any League club from the national membership scheme could make that club a target for hooligans banned from those to which the scheme applied.

Thames Water Authority

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total consumption of water for each year since 1979 for domestic and commercial consumers in the Thames Water Authority area.

Mr. Moynihan: Information in the form requested is not available. However, since 1979-80 the amount of water supplied to all consumers in the Thames Water Authority area has been as follows:

Year (April/March)	*Water Supplied (thousand cubic metres per day)*
1979-80	3,563·43
1980-81	3,570·13
1981-82	3,580·61
1982-83	3,626·09
1983-84	3,782·22
1984-85	3,811·72
1985-86	3,818·39
1986-87	3,932·69
1987-88	3,960·56

These figures represent the daily average for each year and include water supplied by the statutory water companies operating within the Thames Water Authority area.

Sewage Sludge

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department is taking to limit the disposal of sewage sludge at sea and to develop technologically and environmentally acceptable alternatives.

Mr. Moynihan: Control of the disposal of sewage sludge to sea is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. However, my Department is discussing urgently with the water authorities the steps to be taken to achieve significant reductions in the concentrations of "red list" substances in sludge. In addition, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has in preparation a manual of guidance to sludge disposers on how to assess the environmental and economic consequences of the various options available for sludge disposal so that the method having least overall environmental effect in each case can be properly selected.

Water Supply

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the bodies from whom water authorities accept requests for additional chemicals to be added to the public water supply.

Mr. Moynihan: Water undertakers consider requests for additional chemicals to be added to the public water supply from district health authorities under the terms of the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what respects the form of request and acceptance of liability from and by health authorities in respect of adding chemicals to the public water supply varies between water authorities and the statutory water companies.

Mr. Moynihan: When making such requests and accepting liability, health authorities make no distinction between water authorities and statutory water companies.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the statutory water companies which add chemicals to the public water supply at the request of health authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company, South Staffordshire Water Company, East Worcestershire Water Company and Colne Valley Water Company add either hexafluorosilicic acid or disodium hexafluorosilicate to the public water supply at the request of district health authorities.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a water authority can refuse a request from a health authority for additional chemicals to be added to the public water supply.

Mr. Moynihan: Yes.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received regarding the addition of chemicals to the public water supply at the request of health authorities following privatisation of the water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The legal position concerning the addition of fluoride to water supplies is set out in the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985 and will be unaffected by privatisation.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the range of additional chemicals added to the public water supply at the request of *(a)* health authorities and *(b)* other bodies not being water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: Hexafluorsilicic acid and disodium hexafluorosilicate may be added to the public water supply but only at the request of district health authorities.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many water authorities have requested additional financial safeguards in order to cover all liabilities from the effects of chemicals added to the public water supply at the request of health authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The Water Authorities Association has made a request to the Department of Health for additional financial safeguards on behalf of its members.

Toxic Waste Sites

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to obtain, maintain and publish up-to-date *(a)* lists and *(b)* maps, of toxic waste sites in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We see no purpose in doing so as WDAs are required (Section 6(4) of COPA Control of Pollution Act 1974) to maintain a register of all disposal licences in force, which is open to inspection by the public.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Water Pollution

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions there are upon farmers adding to their land chemical or other additives that might pollute water supplies.

Mr. Ryder: Farmers are subject, as are all users of pesticide, to the general obligation imposed by condition 2 of the consent controlling the use of pesticides made under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 that they shall "take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, creatures and plants, to safeguard the environment, and in particular to avoid pollution of water".

Such reasonable precautions would include taking care to dispose of surplus spray and tank washings in a suitable way. Detailed statutory controls include using only pesticides which have been approved under the Regulations, and compliance with any conditions attached to use of the products, given on the product labels. The statutory conditions include maximum dose rates, the maximum number of treatments, and protection of the environment.

Animal Protein

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to prohibit the incorporation of animal residues in poultry feeding compounds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans to do so.

The Protein Processing Order 1981 requires all animal protein including animal residues, for incorporation into poultry feedingstuffs to be manufactured free from salmonella contamination. My officials routinely inspect all plants producing such protein to ensure that this requirement is met. In addition discussions are underway on a code of practice aimed at reducing the risk of the contamination of final feedingstuffs by salmonella.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his estimate of the increase in costs of producing a bacon pig if the use of animal protein in pig feed compounds were banned;

(2) what is his estimate of the increase in costs of producing one dozen eggs if the use of animal protein in poultry feed were banned in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At present prices of animal and vegetable protein, it appears that the effect on production costs of substituting vegetable protein for the use of animal protein (other than fish meal) in feed would be small. However, the effect of a ban on the use of animal protein (other than fish meal) on the price of vegetable protein is difficult to determine and a firm estimate of increased costs both in feed and environmental terms and who would bear these costs cannot be estimated.

PCBs

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 20 December, what level of concentration of polychlorinated biphenyls in cod and whiting caught in Swansea bay is regarded as *(a)* low, *(b)* moderate and *(c)* high; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Guidelines for concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in fish and shellfish have been set for the joint monitoring programme of the Oslo and Paris commissions. Details of the "lower", "medium" and "upper" levels are given in my Department's aquatic environment monitoring report No. 16, page 38, available in the Library of the House.

The guidelines refer to the ranges of contaminant concentrations which would be expected to occur in European waters; they do not necessarily imply any risk to human health or to the environment.

The most recent tests for levels of PCBs in cod from Swansea bay were on cod liver, and give results, so far unpublished, of 1·9mg/kg wet weight. The guideline "lower" level for cod liver is up to 2·0mg/kg wet weight.

Butter

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much reduced-price European Economic Community butter has been sold to the following non-profit-making institutions under the provisions of European Community regulation 2191/81: *(a)* registered charities (excluding private educational establishments), *(b)* old people's homes, *(c)* state-maintained schools, *(d)* independent, non-maintained, private schools and *(e)* others.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1987, a total of 36,942 tonnes of reduced-price butter was sold to non-profit-making organisations in the European Community, of which 5,076 tonnes was sold in the United Kingdom. In 1988, a further 5,414 tonnes was sold to institutions in the United Kingdom. The additional information requested is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantity of butter has been sold from European Economic Community private and public storage over the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what has been the reduction in stockpiles in private and public storage during this period.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the period 1 November 1987 to 31 October 1988, 887,105 tonnes of butter were sold from public intervention storage, and public stocks fell from 1,007,620 tonnes to 162,928 tonnes.

So far as private stocks are concerned, aid is paid for a maximum period of 180 days, and butter for which the aid is paid in any year must be brought back on to the market no later than 31 March the following year. There is therefore no long-term stockpile of butter in aided private storage. Figures are collected only for those butter stocks on which the Community pays private storage aid. During 1988, some 264,000 tonnes of butter received this aid, of which 211,994 tonnes remained in store at 31 October 1988.

Birds (Feeding Areas)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements are made by his Department to encourage farmers to set aside special feeding areas for geese and other birds.

Mr. Ryder: The set-aside scheme provides grants of up to £200 per hectare per year to farmers setting aside arable land and maintaining it in grass or another green cover

crop. The Department's leaflet, "Set-Aside: A Practical Guide", which is sent to all participants, draws specific attention to the case for using set-aside land planted with grass as a feeding area for birds, such as brent geese.

Protein-Processing Plants

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers he has to order the destruction of bits and pieces of dead animals in protein-processing plants which are found by his officials to be contaminated by salmonella bacteria.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Protein Processing Order 1981 requires all animal protein to be manufactured free from salmonella. The correct application of heat and other treatment in the course of processing destroys all salmonella organisms.

In cases where routine sampling and testing indicated the presence of salmonella, further testing is carried out until a salmonella free product is produced.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that no public funds by way of compensation for slaughtered laying hens will be given to any poultry business owning one of the protein-processing plants which his officials have found to be contaminated by salmonella bacteria within the last two years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many protein-processing plants use bits and pieces of dead animals for the purpose of ultimately feeding laying hens.

Mr. Donald Thompson: All protein processing plants producing animal protein use waste animal material in the manufacturing process. The animal protein is then used for incorporation into animal and poultry feedingstuffs including feed for laying hens.

Meat Inspection

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he intends to make to meat inspection procedures after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The arrangements for meat inspection after 1992 will depend upon decisions still to be taken by the Council of Ministers. These decisions will need to be based on proposals by the Commission which have not yet been received.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any evidence of the occurrence of salmonella enteritides in wild animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no specific evidence of occurrence of salmonella enteritides in wild animals. Isolations from wild animals are not required under the Zoonoses Order 1975. It is recognised, however, that animals such as rats and mice and some birds are susceptible to salmonella enteritides.

Ms. Short: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures for the number of positive salmonella tests taken by officials of his Department from animal feed mills in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My officials do not carry out sampling in animal feed mills. Protein processing plants, however, are subject to statutory controls including sampling of animal protein.

The latest figures show that of 135 inspections carried out during 1988 at protein processing plants, 17 cases of salmonella contamination were recorded. In each of these cases advice was given on overcoming the problems and when subsequently the plants were re-inspected they were found to be meeting the required bacteriological standards.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is undertaking to establish the scale of infection of eggs by salmonella.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* In addition to detailed investigations of all reported outbreaks of food poisoning and of all isolations of salmonella in food animals, my Department is working closely with the Department of Health on a co-ordinated programme of research. While the Department of Health through the public health laboratory service is establishing the levels of infections in eggs, my Department is concentrating its efforts on improving the production and processing aspects of eggs.

Field trials are under way to develop a simple rapid test for the detection of salmonella enteritides in birds so that those birds transmitting the organism through their ovaries may be identified.

Amongst other research projects, work is being undertaken on the growth of salmonella in eggs under different storage conditions, and its survival under a range of different cooking regimes.

A working group of Government and industry experts has been established to act as a forum for the exchange of scientific information and to identify areas where further research might be required.

Meat Imports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers he has to place a ban on the import of meat from European Economic Community countries which consistently supply meat with health certificates in cases where the meat is found to be defective; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Community rules require that only meat from export approved slaughterhouses and cutting plants which meet stringent structural, hygiene and inspection standards may be traded between member states. Complaints about consignments found to be defective are raised with the veterinary authorities of the exporting country who are required to take all necessary measures to correct the problem, including if necessary the withdrawal of export approval from the plant concerned. These arrangements work well. Directive 64/433/EEC on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in fresh meat sets out Community procedures for dealing with any problems which cannot be resolved between the competent

authorities of the member states. Under these, member states may be authorised to prohibit the import of meat from the plant concerned if, upon examination, such action is found to be justified.

Pigmeat

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes have been made since 1 January 1988 in the system of enforcing hygiene standards on intra-Community trade in pigmeat; what further measures he proposes to take to prevent the importation of pigs or pigmeat suffering from Aujeszky's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No changes have been made since 1 January 1988 to the system of enforcing hygiene standards on intra-Community trade in pigmeat.

As far as Aujeszky's disease is concerned, imports of pigmeat present no risk. Imports of live pigs present a potential risk unless adequate safeguards are provided. Member states which presently export to Great Britain have agreed to provide official health certification which gives us the protection we need. We are seeking harmonised Community rules which will give us the same degree of protection in relation to possible future imports of live pigs from other member states.

Egg Producers

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of egg producers in the United Kingdom; and what percentage of these producers have diversified into other forms of agricultural production in the last two years.

Mr. Ryder: Information about the number of egg producers who may have diversified into other forms of agricultural production in the last two years is not available. However, details of the number of holdings with laying fowls in the United Kingdom, taken from the United Kingdom annual agricultural census, in this period are given in the table.

Year	*Number of holdings (thousands)*
1986	44·6
1987	41·9
1988	41·3

Very small holdings which make only occasional returns are excluded from these figures.

EC Directives

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about current negotiations on proposed European Economic Community directives relevant to his Ministry.

Mr. Ryder: This Department is currently concerned with negotiations on a number of EC directives. In the food law harmonisation area, directives on food labelling, foods for particular nutritional uses, batch marking and official inspection of foodstuffs, on which common positions have been reached in the Council of Ministers, are currently before the European Parliament. Proposals for directives on nutrition labelling of food and food irradiation are before the Council.

NFU

Mr. Adley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I meet the president of the National Farmers Union frequently to discuss agricultural matters.

Rating Reform

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the impact of the poll tax on farm workers whose rates are paid by their employers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: When the Government's proposals were first announced I received a number of representations about the impact of the introduction of the community charge on farm workers.

Food Grains

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of support per ton of British food grains since 1980, both in constant and current prices, identifying separately the costs of set-aside schemes and identifying the proportion of that support met by public funds; and if he will estimate the proportion of that support directly translated into farm incomes.

Mr. Ryder: The table shows the total cost to the Exchequer of support for cereals in the United Kingdom and the level of cereals production in each year since 1980. It is not possible to distinguish between expenditure on cereals for animal feed, for human consumption or for industrial use. In the period in question there was no expenditure on set-aside.

The measures funded by these expenditures are intended to support the prices received by cereal producers; their effect on producers returns, and hence farm incomes, depends on a number of factors which vary from year to year.

	Expenditure		*Production*
	At current prices	*At constant 1988-89 forecast prices*[2]	
	£ million	*£ million*	*mt*
1980-81	157	247	19·5
1981-82	243	349	19·6
1982-83	337	452	21·9
1983-84	111	142	21·3
1984-85	368	448	26·6
1985-86	654	756	22·5
1986-87	114	128	24·5
1987-88	231	245	21·7
[1]1988-89	166	166	21·0

Source: Annual Review of Agriculture.

[1] Forecast.

[2] Expressed in 1988-89 prices using the forecast GDP deflator at market prices.

Cattle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of support per

British cow and bull since 1980 both in constant and current prices, identifying the proportion of that support met by public funds; and if he will estimate the proportion of that support directly translated into farm incomes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Direct support for beef breeding cows in the United Kingdom is provided under two schemes: the suckler cow premium scheme and, in the less favoured areas, the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme. Rates of payment are shown in table 1. These payments are made directly to producers and form part of farm income. There are no direct payments in relation to dairy cows.

Producers of cattle and milk also benefit directly or indirectly from a range of other measures, mainly in the form of market support for the products concerned. Total public expenditure on these measures, excluding those identified in table 1, is shown in table 2, together with the volumes of production. The purpose of most of the measures related to these expenditures is to support the returns received by producers: their effect on producer revenues, and hence farm income, depends on a number of factors which vary from year to year.

Table 1

PQ 3446

Rates of payment under the Suckler Cow Premium Scheme and Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance: £ per eligible cow

	Suckler Cow Premium (1)		*Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance (1)*			
			Severely dis-advantaged land in LFA		*Disadvantaged land in LFA*	
Scheme year	*Current prices*	*at constant 1988-89 values (2)*	*Current prices*	*at constant 1988-89 values (2)*	*Current prices*	*at constant 1988-89 values (2)*
1979	—	—	29·0	54·1	—	—
1980	12·37	19·5	35·0	55·1	—	—
1981	12·37	17·8	42·5	61·1	—	—
1982	12·37	16·6	44·5	59·7	—	—
1983	12·37	15·8	44·5	57·0	—	—
1984	24·74	30·1	44·5	54·2	—	—
1985	24·74	28·6	44·5	51·5	22·25	25·7
1986	24·74	27·7	54·5	61·0	27·25	30·5
1987	33·40	35·5	54·5	57·9	27·25	29·0
1988	33·40	33·4	54·5	54·5	27·25	27·2

— denotes no scheme in operation.

(1) The proportion of eligible expenditure financed directly by the United Kingdom exchequer is 75 per cent. for the hill livestock compensatory allowance but has varied between nil and around 55 per cent. over the period in the case of suckler cow premia. In both cases, the remainder is financed from the European Community funds to which the United Kingdom contributes.

(2) Rates of payment in current prices adjusted to 1988-89 purchasing power using the GDP deflator for financal years.

Table 2

Public expenditure on beef, veal and milk products: beef, veal and milk production: United Kingdom

	Public expenditure (£ million)						
	beef and veal[1]		*milk products*				
Financial year	*current prices*	*at constant*[2] *1988-89 values*	*current prices*	*at constant*[2] *1988-89 values*	*Calendar year*	*Beef and veal production ('000 tonnes)*	*Output of milk for human consumption (mill litres)*
1980-81	132	207	218	343	1980	1,096	15,340
1981-82	42	60	190	273	1981	1,039	15,237
1982-83	95	127	360	483	1982	980	16,093
1983-84	273	350	570	730	1983	1,044	16,590
1984-85	352	429	263	321	1984	1,136	16,592
1985-86	332	384	356	412	1985	1,123	15,420
1986-87	232	259	300	335	1986	1,046	15,631
1987-88	204	217	302	321	[3]1987	1,077	14,741
1988-89[3]	164	164	153	153	1988	n/a	n/a

[1] Excludes hill livestock compensatory allowances and suckler pig premia.
[2] Expenditures at current prices adjusted to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.
[3] Forecast.

Dumping at Sea

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what volume in cubic metres of British industrial waste, and of dredge spoils has been dumped in *(a)* the Irish sea, *(b)* the North sea and *(c)* other British coastal areas in each year from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information, which is recorded in tonnes, is as follows:

'000 Tonnes

	Liquid industrial waste	*Solid industrial waste*[1]	*Dredged Spoil*[2]
1979			
Irish sea	83·3	118·0	
North sea	455·8	5,515·0	36,754
Other	72·7	0·3	
1980			
Irish sea	55·7	144·5	
North sea	453·3	5,623·1	46,379
Other	15·8	0·2	

	Liquid industrial waste	Solid industrial waste[1]	Dredged Spoil[2]
1981			
Irish sea	47·2	144·5	
North sea	380·9	5,488·5	36,581
Other	44·6	0·2	
1982			
Irish sea	46·9	155·5	
North sea	222·2	5,351·5	34,742
Other	49·1	0·1	
1983			
Irish sea	30·5	164·7	
North sea	218·3	6,003·7	30,922
Other	77·4	0·1	
1984			
Irish sea	28·9	62·5	
North sea	228·9	942·1	43,013
Other	30·7	0·2	
1985			
Irish sea	31·5	19·2	4,382
North sea	262·9	3,865·5	22,747
Other	31·9	0·1	13,075
1986			
Irish sea	27·1	73·1	6,166
North sea	230·6	4,130·2	17,783
Other	26·3	0·8	10,104
1987			
Irish sea	17·0	293·7	5,246
North sea	223·4	3,974·4	17,864
Other	23·7	—	15,224

Information for 1988 is not yet available.

[1] Colliery waste, flyash etc.

[2] Information not broken down into sea areas until 1985.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what volume, in cubic metres, of British sewage sludge has been dumped into *(a)* the Irish sea, *(b)* the North sea and *(c)* other British coastal areas, in each year from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information, for which records are kept in tonnes, is as follows:

'000 tonnes

	Irish sea	North sea	Other British coastal areas
1979	1657·7	5793·1	1511·7
1980	2055·7	5770·4	2646·8
1981	1964·6	5795·7	2262·2
1982	1937·1	5435·8	2239·9
1983	1589·0	5070·2	2211·8
1984	1582·0	5181·4	2409·2
1985	1813·4	5218·8	2387·2
1986	1817·3	5493·8	2376·5
1987	1935·5	4734·3	2300·3

Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the mass in tonnes dumped into *(a)* the Irish sea and *(b)* other British coastal waters in each year from 1985 to 1988 inclusive of (i) arsenic, (ii) lead, (iii) nickel, (iv) chromium, (v) zinc, (vi) manganese, (vii) cadmium, (viii) copper, (ix) uranium, (x) fluoride, (xi) mercury, (xii) halogenated hydrocarbons, (xiii) polychlorinatedbiphenyls, (xiv) organochlorines, (xv) dioxins, and (xvi) organophosphates.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Records are available in respect of the following substances in material dumped under the provisions of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974 (1985) and part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (1986 and 1987). Figures for 1988 are not yet available.

TONNES

	1985	1986	1987
(a) Irish sea			
Arsenic	0	1	1
Lead	320	321	297
Nickel	80	105	87
Chromium	203	202	200
Zinc	822	1,324	916
Cadmium	3	6	4
Copper	207	277	265
Mercury	5	4	3
(b) Other British coastal waters			
Arsenic	41	32	8
Lead	2,950	2,609	2,887
Nickel	1,109	874	935
Chromium	1,530	1,204	1,306
Zinc	6,396	5,581	6,462
Cadmium	30	33	36
Copper	1,574	1,386	1,479
Mercury	16	11	12

Equivalent statistics are not available in respect of the remaining substances. They have been covered by exemptions from the international requirement to report quantities to the Oslo commission on de minimis grounds. It is estimated that any amounts in material dumped under the above Acts have been very small.

DEFENCE

Radar Systems (Procurement)

14. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of procurement of *(a)* Foxhunter and *(b)* the European fighter aircraft radar systems.

48. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of procurement of *(a)* Foxhunter and *(b)* the European fighter aircraft radar systems.

64. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of procurement of *(a)* Foxhunter and *(b)* the European fighter aircraft radar systems.

71. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of procurement of *(a)* Foxhunter and *(b)* the European fighter aircraft radar systems.

Mr. Sainsbury: Foxhunter radars are being delivered to the Royal Air Force in accordance with the terms and conditions of the firm price contract which was placed with Marconi Defence Systems last year. Bids for the European fighter aircraft nose radar competition have been received from two consortia, both of which include British companies. It is hoped that a decision on the winning consortium will be made early this year.

Defence Review

15. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends initiating a defence review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my right hon. Friend has made plain on a number of occasions, there are no plans for any review of our defence policies or commitments beyond the routine appraisal which is part of our annual planning cycle. We shall maintain our main defence roles.

Procurement (Excess Profits)

16. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to stop excess and undue profits in defence procurement.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to stop excess and undue profits in defence procurement.

75. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what initiatives have been taken by his Department to assist smaller firms to bid successfully in defence contracts.

79. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to stop excess and undue profits in defence procurement.

85. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to stop excess and undue profits in defence procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The most effective way of securing keen prices is through competition, and there has been a steady increase since 1979 in the proportion, by value, of contracts placed in a competitive environment. During the same period there has been a significant decrease in the proportion, by value, of contracts priced on the basis of cost plus a percentage fee for profit. Where contracts have to be placed non-competitively we continue to seek all information relevant to pricing, and to use post costing on a selective basis.

Conventional Stability Talks

17. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the Government's policy for the conventional stability talks.

80. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the Government's policy for the conventional stability talks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The British Government and their NATO allies are firmly committed to the new negotiations on conventional forces in Europe which should begin in the near future in Vienna. The Alliance will seek the elimination of capabilities for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action through measures such as the establishment of equal limits on the number of key equipments, like tanks, artillery and other armoured vehicles, held by the countries of NATO and the Warsaw pact. NATO has already suggested that the number of tanks in Europe held in total by the 23 nations of NATO and the Warsaw pact should be limited to about 40,000. Even allowing for the very welcome reductions recently announced by President Gorbachev, this would require large asymmetrical cuts by the Warsaw pact on account of its remaining substantial numerical superiority.

28. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to discuss the Vienna talks on conventional stability.

72. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to discuss the Vienna talks on conventional stability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will next meet Dr. Woerner early this year. They are likely to discuss a wide range of defence and security matters of mutual interest, including arms control. In the meantime, officials are participating at all levels within the Alliance on preparations for the forthcoming negotiations.

Soviet Union (Armed Forces)

18. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether the Soviet Union is halting the modernisation of its armed forces.

61. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has as to whether the Soviet Union is halting the modernisation of its armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no evidence to suggest the Soviet Union is halting the modernisation of its armed forces.

Trident

19. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the production, leasing and servicing arrangements for Trident.

54. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the production, leasing and servicing arrangements for Trident.

59. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the production, leasing and servicing arrangements for Trident.

84. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the production, leasing and servicing arrangements for Trident.

Mr. Sainsbury: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence told the House on 29 November last year at column *224*, a statement on the progress of the Trident programme will take place shortly.

UK Mobile Force

20. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the future role of the United Kingdom mobile force.

Mr. Neubert: Following a NATO review of reinforcements for the northern region, the United Kingdom mobile force will on current plans continue to be committed to the defence of the Baltic approaches.

USSR (Military Reductions)

24. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's short-range modernisation programme of President Gorbachev's proposals for military reductions.

52. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's short-range modernisation programme of President Gorbachev's proposals for military reductions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short).

22. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposed military reductions.

49. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence strategy of President Gorbachev's proposed reductions in Soviet forces stationed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

51. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposal to reduce the numbers of tanks, combat aircraft and artillery systems.

58. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the United Kingdom's defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposals to reduce the numbers of tanks, combat aircraft and artillery systems.

62. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence strategy of President Gorbachev's proposed reductions in Soviet forces stationed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

70. **Mrs. Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the force reductions announced by Mr. Gorbachev.

77. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence strategy of President Gorbachev's proposed reductions in Soviet forces stationed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

88. **Mr. Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposed military reduction.

89. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of President Gorbachev's proposals to reduce the numbers of tanks, combat aircraft and artillary systems.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Free-fall Bombs

69. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans for a nuclear replacement for the Royal Air Force's free-fall bombs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 22 December to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) at column *364*.

NATO Eurogroup

76. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when last he attended a meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Eurogroup.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence attended a meeting of the Eurogroup in Brussels on 30 November 1988.

Defence Producers

25. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for defence procurement of the trend towards trans-national co-operation and merger among major defence producers.

55. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for defence procurement of the trend towards trans-national co-operation and merger among major defence producers.

57. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for defence procurement of the trend towards trans-national co-operation and merger among major defence producers.

63. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for defence procurement of the trend towards trans-national co-operation and merger among major defence producers.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry monitors trans-national co-operative arrangements and mergers among major defence producers and assesses them on a case-by-case basis.

Air Cadets (Venture Fleet Replacement)

26. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which motor glider type has been selected to replace the Venture fleet of the Air Cadets.

Mr. Sainsbury: Invitations to tender for the supply of 53 modern GRP motor gliders are to be issued later this month. A decision on the choice of glider is not expected until July 1989, after evaluation of the tenders and flight and engineering systems checks.

Armed Forces (Civilian Manpower)

27. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians are currently employed by the combined armed forces.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details of MOD service and civilian manpower are provided in section 4 of volume 2 of the annually produced "Statement on the Defence Estimates" (Cmd. 344-II). The latest available figures (at 1 November 1988) are 142,237 United Kingdom-based civilians and 31,534 locally engaged civilians overseas.

Tucano Aircraft

29. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects all Tucano aircraft to be in service with the Royal Air Force.

74. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects all Tucano aircraft to be in service with the Royal Air Force.

83. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects all Tucano aircraft to be in service with the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on 21 December 1988.

Chemical Weapons

30. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last had consultations with his United States counterpart on the deployment of chemical weapons.

40. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last had consultations with his United States counterpart on the deployment of chemical weapons.

86. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last had consultations with his United States counterpart on the deployment of chemical weapons.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ms. Quin).

Army Air Corps

31. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the future role of the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Neubert: The principal role of the Army Air Corps (AAC) will remain the direct support of the ground battle by the provision of armed (principally anti-armour) action, reconnaissance, direction of fire, and command and control. For this purpose the AAC is equipped with a range of rotary and fixed wing aircraft. The corps will also support 24 Brigade in its new airmobile role operating both anti-tank and utility Lynx helicopters. Further support to 24 Brigade will be provided by the RAF's larger troop-carrying and logistic helicopters.

Royal Ordnance plc

32. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why no specific valuation was placed on Royal Ordnance plc intellectual property rights at the time of their sale.

45. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why no specific valuation was placed on Royal Ordnance plc intellectual property rights at the time of their sale.

Mr. Buckley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why no specific valuation was placed on Royal Ordnance plc intellectual property rights at the time of their sale.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why no specific valuation was placed on Royal Ordnance plc intellectual property rights at the time of their sale.

Mr. Sainsbury: When the shares in Royal Ordnance plc were sold to British Aerospace plc the sale was made on the basis of the price offered by the highest bidder for the whole enterprise, including the intellectual property rights. No specific valuation was necessary as the ultimate return to public funds was determined by the open market's assessment of the value of the whole business, including all of its assets and liabilities.

RAF Flight Training (Germany)

33. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions have been placed on the Royal Air Force's flight training in West Germany.

Mr. Neubert: The Royal Air Force, together with the air forces of our allies, as an exceptional measure suspended temporarily flying training in the Federal Republic of Germany on 9 December 1988 as a mark of respect for the victims of the tragic accident at Remscheid the previous day. The Royal Air Force resumed normal training in the FRG on 3 January 1989.

Strategic Defence Initiative

34. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of Defence on the future development of the strategic defence initiative.

65. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of Defence on the future development of the stategic defence initiative.

82. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of State for Defence on the future development of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave on 20 December 1988 to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) at column *253*.

NATO (Military Strategy)

35. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Mr. Manfred Wörner, secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, on military strategy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 22 December to the hon. Members for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) at column *364*.

Armilla Patrol

36. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what lessons have been learned following the deployment of the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The success of the Armilla patrol has reinforced many lessons from the past. These include the importance of setting precise and realistic operational objectives, pursued in accordance with international law and as part of a firm foreign policy. In addition, Armilla has demonstrated the value of close co-operation and concentration of effort with our European and NATO allies in out-of-area operations. Above all, the professionalism of the Royal Navy, the high quality of its equipment, and the quietly effective way it has gone about its task have been shown to be vital to the successful achievement of Armilla's objective of protecting British shipping and contributing to the maintenance of freedom of navigation in the international waters in the Gulf. The Armilla patrol with its afloat support will accordingly remain in the Gulf without change to its mission as long as there is a job for it to do.

However, in the light of the continuing ceasefire between Iran and Iraq, the absence of any recent mining, the achievements of European and American minesweepers in removing mines from international waters, and the successful completion of the 300 mile route check by WEU navies known as Operation Cleansweep, we have decided that there is at present no suitable task for the Calendar MCM group of three Royal Navy mine countermeasures vessels which would justify replacing the present group when it sails home in early March. These vessels will therefore return to high priority tasks in home waters. We shall however keep three MCMVs earmarked for rapid return to the Gulf should circumstances warrant it.

United States Secretary of State for Defence

37. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the United States Secretary of State for Defence; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 22 December at column *364*.

Frigates

38. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the next order for the type 23 frigate.

73. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the next order for a type 23 frigate.

78. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the next order for a type 23 frigate.

81. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends ordering further frigates for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) on 29 November 1988 at column *217*.

SSN and SSBN (Decommissioning)

39. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement of the progress he has made in relation to decommissioning the SSNs and SSBNs between 1988 and 2000.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave the hon. Member on 24 May 1988 at column *160*.

Tactical Air-to-Surface Missiles

41. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of Defence on the development and deployment of the tactical air-to-surface missile.

68. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of Defence on the development and deployment of the tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran).

Anglo-French Reciprocal Purchasing

42. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in Anglo-French reciprocal purchasing of defence equipment.

Mr. Sainsbury: Progress on this initiative, aimed at increasing co-operation to avoid the costly and wasteful duplication of development effort in conventional defence equipment, has been good. A framework of practical measures, including the publication of contracts bulletins in both countries, has now been established. In addition, there have been three equipment conferences, on land, sea and air systems to discuss possible areas of co-operation. These were well attended by industry and Government from both countries. Some contracts have already been signed and more tenders are under consideration on both sides of the Channel.

Defence Export Services Organisation

43. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Defence Export Services Organisation plays in defence exports.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Defence Export Services Organisation provides invaluable assistance to British firms in helping them market and sell their defence products and services overseas.

Chieftain Tank Replacement

44. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the Chieftain tank replacement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 20 December 1988. There have been numerous representations from hon. Members, from industry and from members of the public about the choice of a Chieftain tank replacement.

Reservists

46. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role reservists have in the defence of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: In addition to forming a major element of the reinforcement of NATO, reservists, both volunteer and regular, have a key part to play in the defence of the United Kingdom. The Royal Naval Reserve provides a minesweeping capability in home waters and provide personnel to organise and control merchant shipping worldwide, along with undertaking other tasks in support of the Royal Navy. The Territorial Army and home service force would play a major part in securing our home base, including the guarding of key points and the provision of reconnaissance and signal facilities. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, in addition to undertaking ground defence of airfields, would provide personnel to augment existing capabilities in a wide variety of roles, ranging from maritime communications to photographic interpretation. Where necessary, former Regular Service personnel with a liability to serve after their regular engagement may be called up, principally to reinforce formed units individually.

French Defence Minister

47. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends meeting the French Defence Minister; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence hopes to meet M. Chevenement early this year and, as usual, would expect to discuss a wide range of subjects of mutual interest.

NATO (40th Anniversary)

50. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for celebrating the 40th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 22 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) at columns *377-78*.

WEU Defence Ministers

53. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends meeting the Western European Union Defence Ministers; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence expects to meet Western European Union Defence Ministers again in the spring for discussions on a wide range of defence issues.

NATO-Warsaw Pact (Nuclear Forces)

56. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the current balance in short-range nuclear forces between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current balance in short-range nuclear forces between NATO and the Warsaw pact is illustrated in figure 19 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", Cm 344-I.

Frigates

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the efficiency of type-23 frigates of the delay in provision of command automated control systems.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the efficiency of type-23 frigates of the delay in provision of command automated control systems.

60. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the efficiency of type-23 frigates of the delay in provision of command automated control systems.

87. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the efficiency of type-23 frigates of the delay in provision of command automated control systems.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following the cancellation of the CACS4 programme, two consortia were invited to conduct project definition studies in parallel for a new command system. The results of the competitive PD studies have been received and are currently being evaluated to decide which of the two consortia will continue alone into the development and initial production phase of the project. This will mean that some early type-23 frigates will enter service without a command system.

The lack of a command system will restrict the co-ordination of the weapons and sensors although each weapon and sensor will be capable of independent action. Without the full integration of the weapons and sensors the overall effectiveness of the ship will be reduced, particularly in a demanding multiple threat situation. Despite this, however, the type-23 will provide a very much more effective contribution to our maritime forces than the Leander class frigates that it will replace.

NATO (Military Strategy)

66. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had on military strategy with Mr. Manfred Woerner, secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence last met Dr. Woerner at the meetings of the Eurogroup and defence planning committee in Brussels from 30 November to 2 December. They discussed a wide range of subjects of mutual interest.

NATO Secretary-General

67. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends meeting the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's secretary-general; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will next meet Dr. Woerner early this year. They are likely to discuss a wide range of defence and security matters of mutual interest.

Support Services

90. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what competition takes place in defence support services.

Mr. Sainsbury: In order to obtain the best value for money it is our policy to extend competition in defence support services to the maximum extent possible, consistent with operational requirements. The largest single example is the transfer of the royal dockyards to commercial management, but, in addition, over 120 separate functions and activities have been contracted out in various parts of the Ministry of Defence. Since 1979 and up to March 1988 contracting out of services, excluding the dockyards, has resulted in savings of over 13,000 mainly civilian public sector posts and net annual financial savings of some £50 million. Looking to the future, we have in train a rolling programme of market testing which will extend progressively to all parts of the support area.

Atomic Weapons Establishment, Burghfield

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make it his policy to publish the results of any investigation into the causes of the explosion at the atomic weapons establishment at Burghfield on 2 December; whether any work was carried out to improve the safety of the area in which the explosion occurred as a result of the report by Sir Edward Pochin in 1978; and when was the last time that the area in which the explosion occurred was tested for its safety of operation;

(2) whether the incineration of conventional explosives at the atomic weapons establishment at Burghfield has now been suspended.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 8 December for details of the explosion at AWE Burghfield. The Pochin inquiry of 1978 was concerned solely with the separate issue of the radiological safety of certain buildings at the Aldermaston site.

Arms Race (Symposium)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any Ministers or civil servants from his Department were invited *(a)* to give papers or *(b)* to be in attendance as observers at the international scientists symposium, "Ways out of the Arms Race", at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, in London from 2 to 4 December.

Mr. Sainsbury: No Ministers were invited. No MOD civil servants attended. Imperial college did issue over 100 invitations to MOD employees.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with Royal Ordnance about the production of explosives, propellants and ammunition in the event of war.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD's procurement strategy for explosives, propellants and ammunition to meet both peace time and war time needs takes into account industrial considerations and, where appropriate, discussions with our suppliers, including Royal Ordnance.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he is waiting for the outcome of the Royal Ordnance rationalisation plans before he discusses the retention of specific manufacturing capabilities with the management of Royal Ordnance.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 29 November at column *565* and the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on 29 November at column *567*.

Nitroglycerine

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what priority he accords within the requirements of the defence industrial base for ammunition to the retention of a United Kingdom-based capability to manufacture nitroglycerine.

Mr. Sainsbury: Nitroglycerine is an essential component of many types of ammunition. It is available from a number of United Kingdom and NATO sources. We monitor these sources on a continuing basis to ensure that our requirements will be met.

Procurement Contracts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total amount of cost overruns against original estimates on current procurement contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: Original estimates are, by their very nature, provisional calculations. They will not relate precisely to the scope of work which is contracted for after detailed specifications are agreed. They are not, therefore, susceptible to direct comparison. The majority of defence contracts are now placed at firm, non-variable prices or, otherwise, with provisions to limit the Ministry's liability, or in the case of cost-plus percentage fee arrangements, with a maximum price. Once prices are agreed and contracted for, the liability for cost overruns would rest with the contractor.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if body scans will be made available to British nuclear test veterans, who are concerned about the prospects of their being contaminated by nuclear fall out during British nuclear tests in the 1950s in the Pacific; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no plans to offer scans in a whole body monitor. Participants who are concerned about their health are advised to consult their GP.

"Death on the Rock"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter from the Second Permanent Under-Secretary of State, K. C. MacDonald to Lord Windelsham and Richard Rampton QC, regarding the programme "Death on the Rock" produced by Thames Television.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall consider doing so when Lord Windlesham's report is published.

Service Men (Re-enlistment)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any ex-service men who have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment have been re-enlisted; and what is his policy on such appointments.

Mr. Neubert: Records are not kept in a way which would allow us readily to identify whether any ex-service men with a prison record have been re-enlisted. Applications for re-enlistment are considered against the same criteria as are those applying to join for the first time. Any individual applying to join the armed services is obliged to declare any previous unspent convictions. While the general policy is not to accept for service those who have an unspent conviction involving a term of imprisonment, each case is considered on its own merits and there is provision for exceptions to be made.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is policy with regard to members of the armed forces not on duty crossing into the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Only the following categories of Regular service personnel are permitted to take leave of absence in the Republic of Ireland: those domiciled in the Republic up to the time of their enlistment; those who have a spouse or parents, or in the absence of the latter, a brother, sister or child domiciled in the Republic; and those who have urgent private affairs to settle in the Republic, which cannot be dealt with other than by a personal visit.

Permission to visit the Republic can be given only by the commanding officer of the service man concerned. Service men who breach these regulations are dealt with by the service authorities.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis the Irish Government agree to the armed forces crossing into the Republic of Ireland, as referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East of 6 May, *Official Report*, columns *619-20*.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The details of arrangements between the two Governments concerned regarding cross-border security co-operation are confidential.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, in each year from 1982 to the current date, members of the armed forces on duty have crossed into the Republic of Ireland, distinguishing between land and air crossings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of occasions when members of Her Majesty's forces on duty have crossed into the Republic of Ireland since 1982 is as follows:

	Ground	*Air*	*Total*
1982	17	28	45
1983	13	18	31
1984	16	15	31
1985	14	13	27
1986	31	19	50
1987	34	21	55
1988	15	35	50
TOTAL	140	149	289

On the vast majority of occasions the border was crossed as a result of navigational error; these incidents were notified to the Irish Government. On the remaining occasions, the border was crossed with the agreement of the Irish Government.

Printed Material

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of all printed material designed and printed at Army headquarters Northern Ireland and disseminated to the public from 1979 to the current date.

Mr. Neubert: I am aware of only one such document, entitled "Complaints against Members of HM Forces", which is available to the public at Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary locations. I will place a copy in the Library.

Army Information Services

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing the annual expenditure by his Department on the Army information services from 1972 to the current date.

Mr. Neubert: The Army information services is the name by which the public relations unit in Northern Ireland is known. The major expenditure is that of salaries and associated costs. Approximate figures for the years 1983 to 1988 are as follows:

Year	*£*
1983-84	216,000
1984-85	230,000
1985-86	240,000
1986-87	122,000
1987-88	130,000
1988-89	140,000

The reduction in costs in 1986 onwards is as a result of a cut in staff numbers following a review of public relations numbers. Details for earlier years or more detailed costings cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Overseas Educational Institutions

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the funding of educational institutions overseas in support of the defence programme, referred to in his answer of 23 May to the hon. Member for Brent, East, *Official Report*, column *40*.

Mr. Sainsbury: The defence research programme sponsors two contracts with educational institutions overseas at a total annual value of £70,000.

Project Clockwork Orange

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the project known as Clockwork Orange.

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Member has made various representations. As the hon. Member was advised in a letter dated 15 August 1988 from the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, we are aware of no evidence that a plan by this name ever existed.

Captain Fred Holroyd

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when was the special confidential report relating to Captain Fred Holroyd (retired) written in June 1975, subsequently amended, as referred to in his written answer of 28 March to the hon. Member for Brent, East, *Official Report*, column *363*; on whose authority this was done; and when Captain Holroyd was informed of this amendment.

Mr. Neubert: As the reply given on 20 July 1988 at columns *709-10* to my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces makes clear, following Captain Holroyd's appeal to the Army board of the Defence Council, the Army board directed that all references to a mental problem be removed from his confidential report. Captain Holroyd was informed of this direction in March 1976.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date Captain Fred Holroyd (retired) was informed of the findings of the full medical board which sat on 1 July 1975, as referred to in his written answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East, of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *362*.

Mr. Neubert: Our records show that Captain Holroyd was aware of the findings of the medical board during an interview with the assistant adjutant general on 12 August 1975. We believe that he was informed orally immediately after the Board on 1 July, since this is normal practice.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date Captain Fred Holroyd (retired) was informed of the findings of the special confidential report initiated on 5 June 1975, as referred to in his written answer of 28 March, to the hon. Member for Brent, East *Official Report*, column *362*.

Mr. Neubert: In July 1975.

Computer Hacking

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer of 13 December 1988, there have been any attempts to interfere with unclassified systems by any computer hacker.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two such attempts have been detected. Both were defeated by security precautions.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourism

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether the grant facilities outlined in European Community Document 8794/88 (Proposal for Action Programme of European Tourism Year 1990) will *(a)* become available before 1990 and *(b)* be available for holiday cottage development;

(2) when the European Economic Community tourist grant will be made available for the first time in the United Kingdom;

(3) when the European Economic Community tourist grant will be available to the owners of holiday accommodation; and when the final financial details of the scheme will be known.

Mr. Lee: The funds available under the action programme for European Tourism Year are available for assisting approaches to the promotion of off-season, cultural, rural and social and other forms of tourism and tourism by young people. The Commission will have 2·5 million ecu (about £1·6 million) available in 1990 to contribute up to 40 per cent. of the cost of projects, from anywhere in the Community, which it selects for assistance. All the methods for applying for financial assistance have yet to be finally decided. The Commission intends to start considering applications in 1989.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will enable the English Tourist Board to be a party to the tourist policy review.

Mr. Lee: The English Tourist Board and the British Tourist Authority have been involved fully with the review which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on July 18. The boards' chairmen, each individual member of the boards, and board officials have been seen by the review team. The review team have also received written submissions from the boards.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Government have any plans to reduce or eliminate tax liability for company employees who use the workplace nurseries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.
No.

Vacancies (Coventry)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish an analysis of known job vacancies at *(a)* the jobcentre and *(b)* the careers office, for 16 to 18-year-olds for the Coventry area.

Mr. Cope: Information on job vacancies is not specifically kept for 16 to 18-year-olds.

On 4 November 1988 there were 100 unfilled job vacancies at the Coventry careers office and 479 unfilled job vacancies at the jobcentre. As some employers use both services there could be some duplication in those figures.

Cuprinol Ltd.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive study into pentachlorophenol, lindane and TBTO at Cuprinol Ltd. in Frome, Somerset, will be completed; and whether a copy of the findings will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is not carrying out a study into pentachlorophenol, lindane and TBTO at Cuprinol Ltd. Frome. However, an independent committee of inquiry has been set up by Cuprinol Ltd. and HSE is awaiting the report of that committee before considering what further action, if any, is required.

A review of lindane is to be carried out by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP). This was agreed in November 1988, evidence is to be forwarded in the first instance to HSE by March 1989, and the review is expected to take one or two years. The ACP is also currently carrying out a review of TBTO, which is due to be completed this year.

Pentachlorophenol

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will place in the Library copies of the evidence relating to the carcinogenic effects of pentachlorophenol on humans.

Mr. Nicholls: There are likely to be several hundred articles on the toxicity of pentachlorophenol, which could be relevant to an assessment of its possible carcinogenic effects, published in various scientific journals from different countries. I regret that all this material could be identified and obtained only at disproportionate cost but if the hon. Member has any particular items in mind I should be glad to arrange for the relevant articles to be obtained.

Compulsory Training

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set up an inquiry into the possibility of establishing a compulsory residential training scheme for minors of no fixed abode operated in co-operation with personnel seconded from the armed services.

Mr. Cope: We have no plans to do so.

Job Clubs

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make available the results of the spring 1988 postal survey of ex-job club members; if he will indicate how many of those surveyed were *(a)* in permanent, full-time jobs, *(b)* unemployed and *(c)* in jobs paying more than £120 per week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Copies of the report "Job Clubs—Report on the Postal Survey of Individuals who joined Job Clubs in Autumn 1987" have been lodged in the House of Commons Library.

The survey was a follow-up of a sample of people who joined job clubs between 14 September and 23 October 1987. At the time of the survey, 11 per cent. were still in job clubs, 87 per cent. had left and the destination of the remaining 2 per cent. was unclear.

Of those who had definitely left job clubs, 57 per cent. had left to go into a job or self-employment and a further 14 per cent. had gone into community programme, full-time education or training. Of those who left for a job or self-employment, 58 per cent. described themselves as in permanent, full-time jobs.

At the time of the survey (some six months after joining job clubs) 43 per cent. of all leavers were still in jobs and 40 per cent. described themselves as unemployed.

Thirty one per cent. of those entering permanent, full-time jobs were earning over £120 a week.

The survey showed that the majority of those who leave without a job do so very early on and that after one week the proportion of people leaving for jobs increases up to three weeks' stay (69 per cent.) and then declines gradually up to nine to 13 weeks' stay (60 per cent.). These results demonstrate that it is worth giving job clubs a chance and that persistence pays off.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs have been *(a)* established, and *(b)* closed or withdrawn since the start of the programme, giving the information separately for those run by (i) the employment service and (ii) external agencies; how many job club members have found jobs or other positive outcomes and how many members have now been attending their job club for over six months.

Mr. Lee: Information on the numbers of job clubs established and closed or withdrawn since the start of the programme is only available at disproportionate cost.

At 25 November 1988 1,220 job clubs were open. Of these 536 were run by employment service staff, mainly based in jobcentres, with 684 run by other organisations working to an annual contract. Since April 1986, when central records began, 121,494 job club members have found jobs and a further 31,268 have gone into other positive outcomes such as employment training, a place on community programme, or the enterprise allowance scheme. Records are not kept of the number of members who have been attending job clubs for over six months. However, the job club postal survey which was carried out in March 1988 found that around six months after joining 11 per cent. of respondents were still in job clubs.

London Labour Market Surveys

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what independent technical and academic advice his Department received before commissioning, and as part of the London labour market surveys referred to in the recent White Paper "Employment for the 1990s".

Mr. Cope: My Department's professional staff are trained and experienced in survey design. They are in regular contact with professional colleagues in the academic world and in independent research and survey organisations. The two London labour market surveys referred to in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" (Cm 540) were designed and undertaken by reputable professional survey companies, IFF Research Ltd. and the Harris Research Centre Ltd. Full details of the results and the methods used were published by HMSO in the report entitled "The London Labour Market", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what independent assessment was made of the final report of the London labour market surveys.

Mr. Cope: In publishing the final report of the two London labour market surveys last November under the title "The London Labour Market", and by including in the report full tabulations of the survey results and details of the methodology used, my Department has made the report available for independent assessment by anyone who wishes to read it.

Community Projects

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many projects for disabled people, children, elderly people and the environment face closure as a result of the switch to employment training and his proposals to establish training and enterprise councils; how many community programme jobs will disappear; and what level of funding to local community projects will be lost.

Mr. Nicholls: Detailed information on individual projects is not readily available and could be obtained only

at disproportionate cost. However, every effort has been made to ensure that suitable community programme projects have been able to continue under employment training.

The establishment of training and enterprise councils will improve the quality and suitability of training opportunities for employment training clients, equipping them with the skills necessary to meet the demands of the local labour markets. As at present, the training course includes training on projects which meet the needs of disabled people, children, the elderly, and the environment.

Training Programmes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the quantifiable performance indicators he refers to in paragraph 5.21 of the "Training for Employment" White Paper.

Mr. Nicholls: A range of quantifiable and meaningful performance indicators for employment training is being developed by the training agency along the lines outlined in the White Paper. These will be published in due course.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a local breakdown of *(a)* unfilled vacancies on the YTS and *(b)* those young people disqualified from benefit after termination of their bridging allowance.

Mr. Cope: The number of unfilled YTS places on 30 November 1988, the latest available date, for each of the Training Agency regions is given in the table.

	Number
South East	16,100
London	10,200
South West	12,300
West Midlands	23,400
East Midlands	15,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	10,800
North West	15,700
Northern	7,500
Wales	4,200
Scotland	13,700
Great Britain	129,100

Since 16 and 17-year-olds on bridging allowance while waiting to take up a YTS place have no entitlement to income support, the question of disqualification following the termination of that allowance does not arise.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training scheme places have been filled in each month since the scheme's inception in each area for which employment statistics are collated; and what is the national total.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is provided in the following tables.

Table 1
Employment training: Great Britain filled places

	Great Britain filled places as at:			
	30 September	*28 October*	*25 November*	*16 December*
Great Britain	45,380	67,759	91,060	106,395

Employment training: filled places by area office

Area office	*Filled places as at:* *30 September 1988*	*28 October 1988*	*25 November 1988*	*16 December 1988*
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	223	372	483	563
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	623	853	1,001	1,110
Essex	455	642	772	1,006
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	1,005	1,315	1,523	1,730
Kent	760	1,068	1,365	1,521
Surrey	146	200	267	289
Sussex	587	714	842	928
London Region				
Inner London North	1,280	2,258	3,043	3,484
Inner London South	956	1,268	1,698	1,936
London East	832	1,098	1,421	1,593
London North	897	1,271	1,813	2,100
London South	389	431	614	613
London West	248	431	631	758
South West Region				
Avon	484	642	1,037	1,230
Devon and Cornwall	1,627	2,209	2,939	3,535
Dorset and Somerset	598	876	1,058	1,273
Gloucester and Wiltshire	278	539	708	797
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	1,228	2,086	2,998	3,555
Coventry and Warwickshire	551	838	1,134	1,280
Dudley and Sandwell	926	1,231	1,410	1,589
Staffordshire	769	1,296	1,748	2,051
The Marches, Hereford and Worcester	616	980	1,279	1,590
Wolverhampton and Walsall	863	1,263	1,672	1,874
East Midlands and Eastern Region				

Area office	Filled places as at: 30 September 1988	28 October 1988	25 November 1988	16 December 1988
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	309	489	835	1,035
Derbyshire	726	1,154	1,520	1,702
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	707	1,015	1,352	1,530
Lincolnshire	428	540	673	802
Norfolk and Suffolk	755	1,188	1,404	1,786
Nottinghamshire	973	1,318	1,785	1,929
Yorkshire & Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale & Kirklees	1,400	1,676	2,506	2,925
Humberside	2,016	2,662	3,267	3,542
North Yorkshire & Leeds	907	1,424	2,154	2,474
Sheffield & Rotherham	1,490	2,294	3,024	3,461
Wakefield, Doncaster & Barnsley	1,561	2,126	2,913	3,389
North West Region				
Cheshire	850	1,298	1,699	1,958
Cumbria	235	382	600	773
Lancashire	1,465	1,865	2,420	2,773
Central Manchester	1,346	1,809	2,372	2,500
Greater Manchester North	714	1,103	1,469	1,677
Greater Manchester East	848	1,224	1,589	1,747
Merseyside	1,210	2,197	3,264	3,889
Northern Region				
Cleveland	1,520	2,247	2,984	3,444
County Durham	898	1,629	2,259	2,538
Northumberland, North Tyneside & Newcastle	954	1,130	1,538	2,022
Sunderland, South Tyneside & Gateshead	1,053	2,063	2,886	3,538
Wales				
Dyfed & West Glamorgan	944	1,518	1,943	2,283
Gwent	198	621	868	1,051
Gwynned, Clwyd & Powys	436	993	1,251	1,582
Mid & South Glamorgan	735	1,305	1,934	2,351
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway	451	700	1,060	1,408
Central & Fife	753	974	1,267	1,567
Glasgow City	836	1,201	1,621	2,052
Grampian & Tayside	739	1,078	1,256	1,409
Highlands & Islands	161	214	287	340
Lanarkshire	406	748	1,104	1,311
Lothian & Borders	490	992	1,558	2,005
Renfrew, Dunbarton & Argyll	525	701	942	1,197

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds, by region, had made applications for income support on the ground of extreme hardship and how many had been granted it at the following dates: 23 and 30 September, 7, 14, 21 and 28 October and 4, 11, 18 and 25 November; and how many at the same dates had been granted income support on the ground of being within exempted categories, shown by category.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply. The number of applications from 16 and 17-year-olds for income support on grounds of severe hardship and the number of directions to enable benefit to be paid at each of the dates specified are in the following table:

Cumulative totals Week Ending		DSS Administrative Region: London North	London South	Midlands	North East	North West	Wales and South West	Scotland	Great Britain
23 September 1988	Applications Received	21	11	25	35	33	31	54	210
	Directions Given	18	8	20	25	19	20	33	143
30 September 1988	Applications Received	31	23	41	70	55	49	72	341
	Directions Given	26	20	33	50	31	31	43	234
7 October 1988	Applications Received	48	29	56	96	73	66	99	467
	Directions Given	39	24	43	63	44	41	57	311
14 October 1988	Applications Received	59	43	64	118	89	78	139	590
	Directions Given	47	36	50	77	56	50	79	395
21 October 1988	Applications Received	69	53	87	140	105	89	160	703
	Directions Given	52	44	70	90	66	57	87	466
28 October 1988	Applications Received	87	61	104	160	125	99	199	835

Cumulative totals Week Ending		London North	London South	Midlands	North East	North West	Wales and South West	Scotland	Great Britain
	Directions Given	64	50	82	103	79	60	107	545
4 November 1988	Applications Received	98	72	117	182	139	108	227	943
	Directions Given	71	56	92	118	83	66	121	607
11 November 1988	Applications Received	104	79	137	197	150	117	263	1,047
	Directions Given	77	63	106	128	92	74	147	687
18 November 1988	Applications Received	118	92	150	230	176	139	308	1,213
	Directions Given	86	69	114	152	107	90	184	802
25 November 1988	Applications Received	138	104	188	279	214	159	378	1,460
	Directions Given	101	75	143	184	137	104	236	980

Notes:

(1) Based on 100 per cent. count of applications received.

(2) Information relates to the number of applications rather than to the number of individual young people involved. Some individuals have made more than one application.

The number of awards of Income Support made to 16 and 17 year olds during September and October 1988 is given in the following table:

DSS Administrative Region	Number of awards		
	For a limited period[1]	For an unlimited period[2]	Total
London (North)	27	57	84
London (South)	32	75	107
Midlands	42	103	145
North Eastern	55	105	160
North Western	60	119	179
Wales and South West	38	86	124
Scotland	34	49	83
Great Britain	288	594	882

[1] "Limited period" awards are those made under Schedule 1A to the Income Support (General Regulations)—limited to the same period as the Child Benefit extension period.

[2] "Unlimited period" awards are those made under Schedule 1 to the Income Support (General Regulations)—no time limit.

Notes:

1. Information based on 100 per cent. count of awards made up to 31 October 1988 and represents the only information readily available; weekly information and finer breakdown of categories could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

2. Information relates to the number of awards rather than to the number of individuals involved. Some individuals may have had more than one award.

SCOTLAND

Sheriff Courts (Small Claims Procedure)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheriff courts in Scotland had forms available for issue to the public and practitioners explaining the small claims procedures on 30 November 1988 and which courts did not; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: By 30 November all sheriff courts had had initial deliveries of small claims payment summonses. Small claims summonses for use in the less frequently raised actions of delivery and implement, and general explanatory material about the small claims procedure, were delivered to the courts by early December. Arrangements were also made for supplies of these forms to be issued by the Scottish Courts Administration direct to practitioners and others on request.

Chicken Feed

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many plants producing feeding stuffs for chickens are in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are 23 protein processing plants in Scotland, the products of which may be incorporated into a variety of livestock and poultry feeding stuffs.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will make available the regularity framework under which the electricity supply industry in Scotland will operate after privatisation.

Mr. Lang: I have today made copies of the draft model licence for the successor companies to the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board available to Members of the Standing Committee considering the Electricity Bill, and placed copies in the Library of both Houses accompanied by explanatory notes.

As vertically integrated utilities the Scottish companies will be licensed to generate, transmit and supply electricity. The licence for each company will be granted as a composite document containing the licences for each of these activities.

The licence contains conditions restricting the level of charges and providing for third parties to have access to the transmission and distribution systems of the licensee, conditions relating to technical and operating standards, arrangements for ensuring security of fuel supply, and consultation on employees' health and safety. It also contains conditions prohibiting cross-subsidy or discrimination and makes important provision for aspects of consumer relations and standards of service.

The licence as it will apply to the successor company to the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board contains a condition requiring the licensee to maintain common tariffs in his authorised supply area, pursuant to clause 3(2) of the Electricity Bill. The licensees will be required to provide information to the Director General of Electricity Supply and to pay fees to cover regulatory costs.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce regulations which require that

community charge payers should be informed that the community charge register containing their names and addresses can be inspected and copied by third parties.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* It is made clear in the notice which is sent to registered persons informing them of their entry in the community charges register, prescribed in schedule 2 to the Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 1988, that the parts of the register showing names, addresses and collective community charge multipliers applying to certain premises will be made available for public inspection.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a list of all those categories of people who will *(a)* be excluded from liability to pay the community charge and *(b)* be entitled to a rebate on community charge payments; and what the scale of such rebates will be.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Those persons who will be exempt from liability to pay the personal community charge are listed in schedule 1A to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988. In addition, people undertaking a full-time course of education who fall within the definitions contained in the Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 will be liable for only 20 per cent. of the personal community charge. People on a low income who qualify under the provisions of the Housing Benefit (Community Charge Rebates) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 will be entitled to a rebate of their personal community charge or their collective community charge contribution as appropriate. Depending on their personal circumstances, including income, they will be entitled to a rebate of up to 80 per cent. of their liability.

Fish Farms (Pollution)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to amend the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to enhance the powers of the river purification boards to control pollution from cage fish farms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Discharges from fish farms are regarded as trade effluents and are subject to control by the river purification authorities under the consent provisions of section 34 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. We propose to clarify the application of these provisions to fish farms in forthcoming legislation.

A74

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are for improved road connections between Edinburgh and the A74.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* None are presently planned, as the routes to the south of Edinburgh are being studied by consulting engineers commissioned by the Scottish Development Department to consider the effectiveness of the existing trunk road network in meeting current and future demands between Edinburgh and the south including, in particular, the motorway and trunk road network in England. I expect to receive the technical report, which will recommend a future route strategy, in January and thereafter I intend to make a statement on its findings and the proposed way ahead. This is likely to be in the spring and there will be a period for comment before we reach final decisions.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether expenditure on upgrading the A74 will lead to any delays in other road projects in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Provision for the roads programme has been increased substantially in 1990-91 and later years when construction of the M74 will be under way. Road schemes generally are becoming more expensive as standards rise. Therefore, the benefits accruing from each potential scheme will have to be carefully assessed in the light of the resources available as decided in future reviews of expenditure plans.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the upgraded A74 will be a three-lane or two-lane road.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Feasibility studies are under way to assess the best means of implementing the Government's decision to upgrade the A74 to motorway status. Only after these studies have been completed and all the options examined in depth will a decision be taken about whether the M74 will be a dual two-lane or three-lane motorway.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the upgraded A74 will be a motorway or a road built to motorway standards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The Government are committed to upgrading the A74 to motorway status.

Sewage

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sewage pumping stations in *(a)* Strathclyde regional council area, excluding Glasgow district, and *(b)* Glasgow district council area, have consent for the emergency discharge of screened sewage effluent into local ditches, burns, streams and rivers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* This information is not held centrally. Information regarding sewage pumping stations is held by Strathclyde regional council as sewerage authority. Details of consents for emergency discharges of screened sewage are available from the Clyde river purification board.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring takes place of discharges of screened sewage effluent into watercourses in Scotland; how many such discharges are known to have occurred in each of the last three years; and how many cases of pollution have occurred as a result.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* This information is not held centrally. These discharges are subject to control by the river purification authorities. Information about consented

discharges is held on statutory registers which may be inspected at the offices of the river purification authority concerned. Details of routine monitoring of such discharges and of pollution incidents are also held by river purification authorities.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to make it compulsory for all new residential developments in urban areas to provide a gravity feed sewage system directly connected to the main sewage system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* No. It is not possible to provide gravity-feed sewarage systems in all cases. To act in the manner suggested would involve drainage authorities and developers in unnecessary expense or sterilize areas otherwise suitable for development.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect the discharge of screened sewage effluent into a burn is known to have upon the wildlife existing in such a burn; and what hazards to human health such discharges are known to cause.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The effects of screened sewage discharges on a burn will depend on the composition, duration and frequency of the discharge as well as the dilution afforded by the receiving waters. Fresh water fauna and flora differ widely in their tolerance of pollution. However, regular episodes of pollution could be expected to result in changes in the diversity and relative abundance of species.

As far as hazards to human life are concerned, few dangers are likely to arise unless, in an extremely rare case, the burn is the source for a potable untreated water supply downstream of the discharge. Then there would be a potential threat from bacterial and viral contamination of the water supply.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated difference in cost between providing the proposed new residential development at Springhill farm in Shettleston constituency with *(a)* a gravity feed sewage system or *(b)* a sewage pumping system; and how the total costs are divided between local authority and developer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Detailed cost information for specific schemes is not held centrally. The division of costs between the authority and a developer is for the council to determine in line with its responsibilities under the Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1968.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an annual maintenance and condition survey of roads in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Information on the condition of motorways and trunk roads and on maintenance works undertaken is already published annually in "Scottish Transport Statistics". Information on the condition of non-trunk roads is a matter for local roads authorities and is not published though a random sample survey is undertaken each year under the direction of the County Surveyors' Society.

Rating Reform

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authority employees in each of the regions of Scotland have been used in work relating to the implementation of the Community Charge (Scotland) Act; what the total cost of this has been to date; what effect this has had on other local authority services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* This information is not held centrally.

A8

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the A8 between Baillieston and Newhouse will be upgraded to a motorway linking both sections of the M8.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The proposed extension of the M8 between Baillieston and Newhouse is currently planned to be carried out in two phases. It is hoped the necessary preparatory work for both phases will be completed in time to allow construction to start on the first phase between Baillieston and Shawhead in late summer 1991 and on the second phase between Shawhead and Newhouse in early summer 1994. The actual timing of starts will depend upon priorities within, and the finance available for, the trunk road programme at those dates.

Irish Citizens

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many citizens of the Republic of Ireland occupy public sector housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of citizens of the Republic of Ireland whose names are on electoral registers in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* There is no requirement for the nationality of an elector to be entered in the electoral register. My right hon. and learned Friend has made no estimate of the number of citizens of the Republic of Ireland whose names are on electoral registers in Scotland, but table 2 in the country of birth volume of census 1981 Scotland shows that some 26,500 such citizens aged 16 and over were resident in Scotland at that time.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the groups with which the Scottish Special Housing Association has discussed or intends to discuss the transfer of housing stock in each district council area of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 December 1988]:* A number of general inquiries have been addressed to the Scottish Special Housing Association

about the transfer of ownership or management of parts of its housing stock. Such inquiries are commercial in confidence. Until such interested parties declare they are interested publicly it would be improper and inappropriate for the SSHA or the Government to announce them. Most inquiries are from existing housing associations mainly interested in small numbers and in particular parts, of the SSHA housing stock in their areas.

Two firm proposals for the purchase of housing stock already have been made public. The SSHA has confirmed that a proposal by a group of senior SSHA managers, advised by Price Waterhouse, to purchase up to 25,000 houses in SSHA's south region and Fife region is not acceptable in its present form. A separate proposal by Grampian Homes Ltd. to purchase up to 3,600 houses in the district council areas of Aberdeen, Banff and Buchan, Gordon, Kincardine and Deeside and Moray which includes proposals to establish ownership corporations and housing associations, is still under consideration and it will be for Scottish Homes to respond to this proposal after 1 April 1989.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what authority the Scottish Special Housing Association has entered into discussions for the transfer of housing stock and tenants to other landlords; what involvement his office has had in this; what safeguards for tenants he has demanded of the Scottish Special Housing Association; and what is his general policy on stock transfer ahead of 1 April 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 December 1988]*: Public sector landlords, including the Scottish Special Housing Association, have always had the legal right to make voluntary disposals of houses to other landlords, subject to the Secretary of State's consent. A number of inquiries have been made about the transfer of SSHA houses, but the Scottish Office has not given its approval to any proposals for the voluntary sale of SSHA stock. It has been made clear to such inquirers that the diversification of housing tenure is one of the Government's objectives and that the Government welcome appropriate moves to reduce the dominant public sector share of the housing stock in particular localities. However inquirers have been told that they must submit any proposals to the SSHA.

I have also made it clear to SSHA that it must follow the guidelines issued recently to local authorities on the handling of such voluntary sales or the Secretary of State would not be prepared to consent to any disposals. In particular, the Secretary of State would need to be satisfied prior to any possible sale that there had been proper arrangements for consultations with tenants. The Secretary of State would also wish to consider carefully the value for money of any proposal put forward by SSHA or Scottish Homes and all relevant matters affecting the interests of tenants. More detailed guidance on the particular factors relevant to proposed sales of SSHA, or in future Scottish Homes, stock is being prepared by the Scottish Development Department.

I have concluded, with the agreement of the SSHA, that it should be for Scottish Homes to respond formally to proposals for voluntary transfers of stock after 1 April 1989. Scottish Homes will of course be required to consult tenants if it wishes to proceed with a proposal, and depending on the outcome, would then have to seek the Secretary of State's consent and satisfy the Secretary of State that the interests of tenants were safeguarded.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Plastic Bullets

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals have been charged or disciplined for misuse of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland for each year since they were first used.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is not available in the form requested. However, since 1978 a total of five RUC officers have been charged with disciplinary offences and one with a criminal offence arising from the use of plastic baton rounds. One officer was found guilty of disciplinary offences and the remainder were found not guilty. Records are not maintained centrally of minor disciplinary action taken at divisional level against RUC officers and information about such action could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Since 1972 three soldiers involved in two separate incidents have been charged for misuse of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland; in one case the charge was dismissed and the other case, involving two soldiers, has not yet been finalised. Information about soldiers disciplined as a result of incidents involving the use of baton rounds is not available.

Quangos

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table or list in the *Official Report* showing for each quango in Northern Ireland, the name of the chairman, the name of the chief executive, the length of each period of appointment of each and the present salary paid where the posts are paid posts and indicating for how many periods of appointment each such chairman and chief executive has been serving.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A table giving this information has been placed in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Needham: The discretionary part of the social fund has been operating for over seven months and some patterns and trends have emerged.

Applications for social fund loans have been increasing steadily and by the end of October loan payments totalling £5·857 million had been made. The majority of loan applications have resulted in awards and a minority have been turned down on grounds of low priority.

The take-up of community care grants has been lower than expected and the end of October grants amounting to £1·198 million had been paid. Some measures to increase take-up have already been implemented, the demand for grants is gradually increasing, and we are considering possible further steps to increase awareness of the availability of grants amongst those people for whom they are intended.

The review system is operating satisfactorily. About 23 per cent. of people refused a payment have asked for a

review of the decision at the social security office. In just under a quarter of the cases reviewed the original decision has been changed. By the end of October some 109 people had exercised their right to ask for a further review by the social fund inspector. In 67 out of 99 cases decided, the original decision was confirmed by the inspector.

Extradition

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make representations to the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland to ensure that any future applications for extradition of persons to Britain will be dealt with promptly and in accordance with the laws of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: The Government of the Republic of Ireland are well aware of our views. We remain in close touch on extradition matters and, indeed, on all matters affecting Anglo-Irish relations, through the auspices of the Anglo-Irish inter-governmental conference, which is the appropriate forum for such discussions. We shall continue to work together to ensure that extradition is an effective method of bringing fugitives from Northern Ireland to justice.

Action for Community Employment

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many action for community employment scheme sponsors are presently operative in each of the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland; how many reductions in places have been required in each district council area to date; and how many further reductions are envisaged.

Mr. Viggers: The number of ACE sponsors presently operating in each of the 26 district council areas is as follows:

	Number
Antrim	3
Ards	7
Armagh	10
Ballymena	8
Ballymoney	3
Banbridge	4
Belfast	147
Carrickfergus	3
Castlereagh	2
Coleraine	6
Cookstown	2
Craigavon	16
Derry	31
Down	12
Dungannon	4
Fermanagh	37
Larne	3
Limavedy	8
Lisburn	12
Magherafelt	4
Moyle	4
Newry and Mourne	20
Newtownabbey	7
North Down	8
Omagh	20
Strabane	17

There are no plans to reduce the number of places in any of these projects.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the action for community employment scheme sponsors in the Armagh district council area and state the reduction of places required for each sponsored scheme.

Mr. Viggers: The following ACE sponsors operate in the Armagh district council area:

Armagh Business Group
Armagh Business Centre
Armagh Diocesan Council
Archdiocese of Armagh
Armagh District Council
Cill Chlunna Community Association
Crossfire Trust
Oonagh Development Association
St. Patrick's Parish Armagh
St. Patrick's Parish—Keady

There are no plans to reduce the number of places in any of these projects.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the action for community employment scheme sponsors in the Newry and Mourne district council area and state the reduction of places required for each sponsored scheme.

Mr. Viggers: The following ACE sponsors operate in the Newry and Mourne district council area:

Clonduff Playgroup
Hilltown Community Group
Rathfriland Tara
Clanrye Abbey Developments
Confederation of Community Groups
Crossmaglen Community Association
Cuan Mhuire Trust
Kilbroney Centre
Mourne Community Association
Newry Citizens Advice Bureau
Newry & District Community Services
Newry & Mourne Co-op
Newry & Mourne Pre-School Playgroup Association
Sisters of Mercy
St. Vincent de Paul Camlough
St. Patrick's and St. Colmans Trust
St. Monninna Youth Club
St. Patrick's Youth Club Mayobridge
St. Peter's Parish Warrenpoint
Warrenpoint Mothers and Toddlers

There are no plans to reduce the number of places in any of these projects.

DNA Profiling

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether all mouth samples taken for DNA profiling purposes in criminal investigations are obtained by means of a swab taken from between the lip and the gum.

Mr. Tom King: Yes. I can confirm that all mouth samples for DNA are obtained by inserting a sterile cotton wool swab into the area between the lip and gum and rubbing the swab over the inner surfaces. No scraping is involved.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times DNA profiling has been employed in criminal investigations of *(a)* scheduled offences, distinguishing between intimate and non-intimate and between those cases where the sample was taken voluntarily and those where the sample was taken without the consent of the suspect and *(b)* in non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Tom King: DNA profiling has been employed in the criminal investigation of three scheduled offences and three non-scheduled offences.

In one scheduled case in which the technique was used before the statutory provision in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 came into force, it was not necessary to invite the suspect to provide any sample either intimate or non-intimate. In two cases (one scheduled and one non-scheduled) the suspects offered both intimate and non-intimate samples. In the remaining three cases, one of which was scheduled, the suspects offered only an intimate sample.

In these latter five cases, all the samples provided were taken with the consent of the suspects concerned.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times mouth samples have been taken for DNA profiling purposes in connection with criminal investigations of scheduled offences, distinguishing between non-tissue cases where the sample was taken with the consent of the suspect and those where the suspect refused consent.

Mr. Tom King: Mouth samples have been taken from nine persons in connection with criminal investigations of scheduled offences. In all cases, these samples were taken with the consent of the person concerned.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many records of DNA samples obtained in the course of investigations of *(a)* scheduled offences and *(b)* non-scheduled offences have been (i) kept and (ii) destroyed.

Mr. Tom King: No records of DNA samples obtained in the course of investigations have yet been destroyed. In two cases, one scheduled and one non-scheduled, convictions were secured. The remaining four cases are either awaiting court action or are still actively under investigation.

Higher Education

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate expenditure on higher education as a percentage of the Northern Ireland gross domestic product for the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The available figures are as follows:

Financial year	*Gross domestic product (1) £ million*	*Higher education expenditure excluding student support (2) £'000s*	*(2) as a percentage of (1)*
1983-84	5,291	60,177	1·137
1984-85	5,646	62,887	1·114
1985-86	6,167	68,543	1·111
1986-87	6,840	71,000	1·038
1987-88	7,388	80,008	1·083

Income Support

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many 16 and 17-year-olds who previously received income support were transferred to a bridging allowance after new benefit rules were introduced in September for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Some 986 young people transferred from income support to bridging allowance in September 1988.

Full-time Education (Statistics)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest figures for the percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds involved in full-time education for each education and library area in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

Top-up Loans

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representation he has received concerning the proposed introduction of top-up loans to Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Representations have been received from four Members of Parliament, local representatives of the National Union of Students and other student bodies.

Mandatory Awards

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown of the number and value of mandatory awards provided by each education and library board over the past seven years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Education and Library Board and financial year	*Number of mandatory awards*	*Value of Awards (£)*
Belfast		
1982-83	n.a.	n.a.
1983-84	2,360	3,958,000
1984-85	3,292	4,231,000
1985-86	3,243	4,505,000
1986-87	3,234	4,741,000
1987-88	3,325	3,806,000
†1988-89	3,463	6,106,000
South-Eastern		
1982-83	n.a.	n.a.
1983-84	2,190	3,850,000
1984-85	3,393	4,220,000
1985-86	3,402	4,496,000
1986-87	3,735	4,733,000
1987-88	4,083	6,550,000
†1988-89	4,283	7,293,000
North-Eastern		
1982-83	3,441	6,009,340
1983-84	3,573	6,071,755
1984-85	3,437	6,483,971
1985-86	3,693	6,700,624
1986-87	4,039	7,747,000
1987-88	4,080	7,982,000
†1988-89	4,239	8,415,000
Southern		
1982-83	3,020	n.a.
1983-84	2,961	5,369,800

Education and Library Board and financial year	Number of mandatory awards	Value of Awards (£)
1984-85	3,318	6,313,218
1985-86	3,393	6,388,913
1986-87	3,508	7,059,195
1987-88	3,665	7,555,652
[1]1988-89	4,021	8,530,000
Western		
1982-83	n.a.	n.a.
1983-84	n.a.	5,088,430
1984-85	2,752	5,546,943
1985-86	2,721	5,901,338
1986-87	3,004	6,379,000
1987-88	3,154	7,014,000
[1]1988-89	3,387	7,587,000

[1] Provisional figures.
n.a. = Not available.

Student Awards

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate expenditure on student awards as a percentage of the Northern Ireland gross domestic product for the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Students awards are made up from mandatory and discretionary awards paid by education and library boards and teacher training, youth service, adult education, postgraduate bursaries and studentships paid by DENI. The information is as follows:

Financial year	Gross domestic product (1) £ million	Amount spent on awards (2) £	(2) as percentage of (1)
1983-84	5,291	32,607,673	0·616
1984-85	5,646	35,716,912	0·633
1985-86	6,167	37,288,280	0·604
1986-87	6,840	40,249,018	0·588
1987-88	7,388	45,098,862	0·610

Water Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many incidents of water pollution by farm wastes were *(a)* recorded in each of the years 1980 to 1987 and 1988 to date in Northern Ireland, *(b)* attributable to pollution by (i) silage effluent and (ii) slurry and *(c)* the subject of warning letters and prosecutions; and how many prosecutions were successful.

Dr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* Details of recorded water pollution incidents arising from agriculture for the years 1980 to 1987 inclusive are as follows:

Year	Slurry — Water Act (NI) 1972				Silage — Water Act (NI) 1972			
	Number of Incidents	Prosecutions	Successful Prosecutions	Warning Letters	Number of Incidents	Prosecutions	Successful Prosecutions	Warning Letters
1980	355	10	10	—	232	3	3	—
1981	321	10	10	—	125	—	—	2
1982	326	5	5	—	135	—	—	—
1983	369	—	—	2	420	48	43	14
1984	443	3	2	17	157	2	2	16
1985	513	6	6	12	418	13	13	28
1986	393	14	14	7	283	32	32	26
1987	467	17	15	8	479	90	88	43
1988	331	9	9	3	158	—	—	9

The figures show the action taken by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland for those cases referred to it for consideration for prosecution under the Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Figures for 1988 incidents are based on returns for the first two quarters.

Income Support

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers claiming income support at each social security office in Northern Ireland; what are the numbers of dependants of such claimants; and what are the numbers of these claimants receiving pensions and sickness or invalidity benefit.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* The number of income support claimants and those also receiving retirement pension in each social security office on 31 August 1988, the latest date for which statistics are available, is as follows:

Social security office	Number of claimants claiming IS at 31 August 1988	Number of claimants receiving retirement pension at 31 August 1988
Andersonstown	7,752	937
Antrim	5,161	1,112
Armagh	5,022	1,370
Ballymena	5,929	1,516
Ballymoney	4,543	1,121
Ballynahinch	1,467	521
Banbridge	3,353	1,083
Bangor	4,803	1,411
Carrickfergus	2,899	673
Coleraine	5,993	1,360
Cookstown	3,491	883
Corporation St.	12,169	2,633
Downpatrick	2,249	547
Dungannon	6,158	1,655
Enniskillen	8,129	2,584
Falls	9,147	1,563
Holywood Road	8,536	2,312
Kilkeel	1,382	406
Knockbreda	6,039	2,024
Larne	2,799	629
Limavady	3,282	619
Lisburn	6,115	1,866
Londonderry	14,684	2,542
Lurgan	5,697	1,393
Magherafelt	5,132	1,521

Social security office	Number of claimants claiming IS at 31 August 1988	Number of claimants receiving retirement pension at 31 August 1988
Newcastle	1,887	579
Newry	9,343	2,287
Newtownabbey	5,485	1,292
Newtownards	4,197	1,273
Omagh	5,831	1,494
Portadown	3,785	1,077
Shaftsbury Sq.	7,775	1,541
Shankill	5,256	1,440
Strabane[1]	5,867	1,472
Total	191,357	46,736

[1] All figures are at 31 August 1988 except for Strabane where the latest figures available are at 31 May 1988.

Information regarding the number of dependants and those income support claimants also receiving sickness or invalidity benefit is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

RUC and UDR (Religions)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the breakdown of the number of Protestants and Catholics serving in *(a)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary and *(b)* the Ulster Defence Regiment in each year from 1969 to the present date.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* Although arrangements are currently being made to introduce monitoring of the religious denomination of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its Reserve, the database has not yet been completed. The information requested is therefore not available. However, I understand that currently about 10 per cent. of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and full-time Reserve is believed to be Roman Catholic.

It is not policy to maintain separate statistical records of religious beliefs of Army personnel in any regiment or corps. However, over the last five years it is estimated that the number of Roman Catholics in the Ulster Defence Regiment has formed between 2 and 3 per cent. of that regiment's strength.

Prevention of Terrorism

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown of those people arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for each year since 1974 *(a)* at ports, *(b)* at airports, *(c)* in their homes, *(d)* in other places; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures between men and women detainees.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost since it would involve the examination of nearly 10,000 individual records. The number of persons arrested in Northern Ireland each year under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts since 1974 is as follows:

	Persons arrested
[1]1974	Nil
1975	8
1976	246
1977	162
1978	155
1979	162
1980	222
1981	495
1982	828
1983	1,175
1984	908
1985	938
1986	1,309
1987	1,459
[2]1988	1,609

[1] From 29 November.
[2] Up to 30 November.

Short Brothers

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about progress with the privatisation of Short Brothers.

Mr. Viggers *(pursuant to his reply of 22 December 1988):* An information memorandum relating to Short Brothers plc which has been prepared to assist potential purchasers in formulating preliminary proposals is being issued today by Kleinwort Benson, financial advisers to the Government. Prospective purchasers will have until 10 February to submit their proposals, and are also being asked to supply information about their present activities and future strategy. A shortlist of possible purchasers will thereafter be drawn up. In my statement of 21 July, 1988, I said that Her Majesty's Government's preference was to sell the company as a whole and it is on this basis that proposals are now being invited from private sector interests.

The Government will continue to stand behind the company in the period leading to privatisation. When the company is privatised, the Government intend to ensure that it will have a capital structure which will enable it to operate without the need for Government assurances to creditors, and such assurances will be withdrawn so far as new obligations are concerned.

The company's accounts for the year ended 31 March 1988 have also been placed in the Library today.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Resettlement Unit

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many items of correspondence he has received on the work of the resettlement unit since 1 July from hon. Members.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Five.

Unemployed People (Spouses)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates exist of the number of registered unemployed supplementary benefit recipients whose spouses worked for less than 30 hours per week at the most recently available date prior to April; and what estimates exist of the number of registered unemployed income support recipients whose spouses work for less than 24 hours per week at the most recently available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Social Security Reform

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what figures or estimates exist for the numbers of claimants receiving unemployment benefit, income support or national insurance credits who will cease to do so as a result of section 6 of the Social Security Act 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Those receiving unemployment benefit on 2 October 1988, when section 6 of the Social Security Act 1988 came into operation, will continue to receive benefit under the old contribution conditions for up to a year under transitional arrangements. People claiming unemployment benefit after October 1988, whose claims do not link with a claim before that date, have to satisfy the new contribution conditions. It is estimated that, in a full year, some 350,000 claimants for unemployment benefit will not satisfy the new contribution conditions. Of these some 300,000 will qualify for income support. All those continuing to sign at the unemployment benefit office can receive national insurance credits subject to the usual rules, whether or not they are entitled to benefit.

Office Work Loads

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the regionally aggregated monthly figures for office workloads by category of claimant at the most recently available date and at the equivalent periods over the last two years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the following tables. Table 1 shows Income Support/Supplementary Benefit workloads by category of claimant at 30 November 1988 and at equivalent dates in 1987 and 1986. Table 2 shows Contributory Benefit workloads at the same dates.

Any comparison drawn between the 1988 figures provided in this reply and similar information for dates prior to 11 April 1988 should be qualified by the fact that final Supplementary Benefit figures contain possible inaccuracies.

Table 1—Income Support/Supplementary Benefit Live Loan Activity

Work area	*North East*	*Midlands*	*London North*	*London South*	*Wales and South West*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*National*
Number of cases as at 30 November 1988								
E	230,993	209,517	196,417	160,031	149,341	220,614	178,065	1,344,978
SA less E	211,643	216,232	207,901	179,587	163,741	219,956	164,982	1,364,042
SP	252,296	268,074	255,417	233,625	219,378	230,579	156,843	1,616,212
Number of cases as at 17 November 1987								
E	290,108	300,852	285,667	246,429	209,341	279,745	219,598	1,831,740
SA less E	241,193	251,037	237,569	202,024	187,210	235,147	175,882	1,530,062
SP	261,987	274,141	281,179	254,733	223,028	238,186	152,791	1,686,045
Number of cases as at 16 December 1986								
E	319,533	334,570	306,470	272,929	235,525	306,720	229,320	2,005,067
SA less E	230,638	242,165	223,136	194,942	180,375	223,054	163,899	1,458,209
SP	257,584	271,854	281,660	254,086	223,109	235,908	147,889	1,672,090

Notes:
1. SP = Supplementary Allowance
2. E = Unemployed.
3. SP = Supplementary Pension.

Table 2—Contributory Benefit Activity

Work Area	*North East*	*Midlands*	*London North*	*London South*	*Wales and South West*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*National*
Month ended 30 November 1988								
STB Load	245,822	194,610	154,692	135,651	239,774	240,805	186,145	1,397,499
MA Load	2,230	3,185	3,971	3,974	2,605	1,961	1,336	19,262
SDA Load	38,388	39,551	32,620	33,680	37,504	36,812	29,166	247,721
RP Load O/S	21,286	23,423	27,787	26,845	25,288	22,095	16,473	163,197
RP Claims O/S	6,374	7,866	5,981	6,293	6,471	6,745	3,743	43,473
4 weeks ended 17 November 1987								
STB Load	224,750	175,364	142,085	124,468	224,155	215,794	167,368	1,273,984
MA Load	2,399	3,446	4,801	4,404	2,909	2,337	1,727	22,023
SDA Load	36,861	37,104	31,468	33,034	36,143	35,226	28,625	238,461
RP Load O/S	20,047	22,543	27,625	26,646	24,477	20,185	14,948	156,471
RP Claims O/S	7,945	9,590	7,279	7,944	9,014	7,731	4,655	54,158
4 weeks ended 18 November 1986								
STB Load	220,522	176,842	151,790	130,503	220,031	209,181	163,013	1,271,882
MA Load	18,459	22,217	24,921	23,406	17,790	16,937	12,191	135,921
SDA Load	36,688	36,472	31,273	33,246	35,936	34,518	28,352	236,485
RP Load O/S	24,194	26,266	31,124	30,939	30,082	23,900	17,885	184,390
RP Claims O/S	8,602	11,204	8,317	9,462	10,143	8,405	5,478	61,611

Notes:
1. STB = Short Term Benefit.
2. MA = Maternity Allowance.
3. SDA = Severe Disablement Allowance.
4. RP = Retirement Pension.
5. O/S = Outstanding at end of period.

Source: Internal management information returns—100 per cent. counts. It should be noted that the information for 30 November 1988 is provisional and subject to change.

Homelessness

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* his response to the document entitled "The First Four Weeks," which was forwarded to him before Christmas by the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are giving urgent and careful consideration to the recommendations contained in "The First Four Weeks" as well as to concerns expressed by other organisations representing the interests of young people.

Hostels

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the recommendations in the pamphlet entitled "Hostel Crisis," published by the Special Needs Housing Forum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 27 October at column *337*.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the proposals he has to replace his Department's payments for board and lodging with housing benefit; if he has projected what impact these changes will have on hostels in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: From April 1989, people in ordinary board and lodging accommodation will be able to claim income support for their living expenses and housing benefit for their accommodation costs in the same way as other people in rented accommodation. On payments to people in hostel accommodation, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 27 October at column *337*.

Benefits

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for the delays in payment of state pensions and other state benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are not aware of any general delays in the payment of state pensions and other state benefits. If, however, the hon. Member is aware of difficulty in a particular case, I should be grateful for the details.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the amount of benefits to which people in Peckham are entitled but which is not claimed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Survey-based estimates of the numbers of people who may be eligible for benefit but who do not claim are available only at national level.

Training Allowance

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether YTS trainees who lose their entitlement to training allowance after three weeks sickness are entitled to sickness benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Young people who have not worked prior to starting on the YTS scheme will not qualify for sickness benefit when they fall sick, as they will not satisfy the contribution conditions for that benefit. YTS trainees with a previous record of employment may qualify, but only if they have paid sufficient contributions at the relevant time. In appropriate cases, child benefit or income support may be payable.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines he has issued to benefit officers to ensure that unemployed income support claimants who receive training allowance on beginning employment training continue to receive housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Unemployed income support claimants who undertake employment training have their training allowance set at a level which ensures continuing payment of income support.

DSS local offices have been instructed to ensure that the local authority is aware of the continuance of income support during employment training. Existing entitlement to housing benefit should not, therefore, be affected.

Board and Lodging

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether 18 to 25-year-old claimants who participate in employment training and who are living in board and lodgings are exempt from the restrictions and the time limits that would normally apply to board and lodging payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Financial limits on board and lodging payments apply to all claimants receiving income support. The restrictions that apply to boarders under 25 do not apply to those who participate in employment training.

Child Benefit

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be *(a)* the gross and *(b)* the net cost of raising child benefit in a full financial year in line with the rise in tax thresholds in 1989-90 uprated according to the statutory formula.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available. The general index of retail prices for December 1988, on which the calculations would be based, has not yet been published.

Pensioners

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of retirement pensioners

receiving supplementary benefit during the three months prior to April 1988 and income support in the first three months following the change.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. However, in November 1987, about 1·6 million retirement pensioners were claiming supplementary benefit. A comparable figure for income support is not yet available. For information about the numbers of income support claimants in receipt of a pensioner premium, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 14 December 1988 at column *588*. [*Source:* November 1987 *Quarterly Statistical Enquiry*.]

Christmas Bonus

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he took to ensure that the Christmas bonus was paid to all those stated to be entitled to it in the notes issued with his press release dated 2 December 1988, including men of 60 to 64 years receiving income support with a pensioner premium.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The notes issued with the press release in question regrettably contained an error, for which the Department has since apologised. The Christmas bonus is not paid to men aged 60 to 64 who receive income support with a pensioner premium. The 1988 bonus has been paid to all those people entitled to receive it.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what resources have been made available for implementation of sections 1, 2, 3, 7 and 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are currently engaged in discussions with representatives of health and local authorities on the resources required to implement section 7 of the Act, which we agree is our next priority. No decisions have yet been reached about resource requirements. Similar work on the implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 will follow.

Section 11, which will be implemented this year, will have no resource implications outside Government.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consultations he has had with local authorities and voluntary organisations on the implementation of section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has had with local authorities and voluntary organisations on the implementation of section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Discussions have taken place between officials and local authority representatives and are continuing. Officials will consult other relevant bodies as necessary.

Attendance Allowance

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the amount of attendance allowance which is not claimed.

Mr. Scott: The OPCS surveys of disabled people have collected data about the incidence of different types and degrees of disability and also about the receipt of benefits. Using these data, OPCS has shown (see for example table 3.8 in "OPCS Disability Surveys Report 2: The financial circumstances of disabled adults living in private households"—a copy of which is in the Library) the proportions of people receiving attendance allowance at various levels of severity of disability. It should, however, be borne in mind that, since 1985, when these data were collected, there has been a one-third increase in the number of AA recipients. It is not possible to use the OPCS data about the incidence of disability to identify with sufficient certainty the total number of people who would satisfy the eligibility criteria for AA, and thereby to estimate the amount of benefit not claimed.

Family Incomes

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish figures comparing the equivalence scales used in households below average incomes with the equivalent scales implied in the income support allowances and premiums, taking a single householder as the reference point; and if he will publish a table comparing the equivalent incomes derived from the households below average incomes scale with equivalent incomes derived from the income support scale, taking a single non-householder on income support with £33·40 as the reference point and the following family types for comparison: *(a)* a married couple, *(b)* a couple with one child aged under one year, *(c)* a couple with two children aged seven and 10 years, *(d)* a couple with three children aged two, four and six years, *(e)* a couple with four children aged five, seven, 10 and 16 years, *(f)* a lone parent with one child aged six months and *(g)* a lone parent with two children aged seven and 10 years;

(2) if he will publish the equivalence scale used for Households Below Average Incomes: A Statistical Analysis, taking the single adult non-householder as the reference point; and if he will also publish the equivalent incomes implied by that scale for each age group, taking the income support allowance for a single person aged 25 years or over as the reference point.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: *[holding answers 29 and 30 November]:* Figures providing the information requested have been put in the Library. It is important to recognise that, for the detailed reasons given in the commentary preceding the figures, comparisons between the households below average income equivalence scales and the income support relativities must be interpreted with caution.

Child Benefit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what is the cost in 1988-89 and 1989-90 of a 50p increase in child benefit assuming *(a)* corresponding increases in income support rates *(b)* corresponding increases in family credit rates *(c)* no corresponding increases in income support rates and *(d)* no corresponding increases in family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* In income support the amount provided for each child is reflected in full in the personal allowance, and child benefit is taken fully into account as income. So increasing both

child benefit and the income support personal allowance by 50p would give an overall increase of 50p per child. In family credit, child benefit is not taken into account, and the support for each child is the total of child benefit and the family credit child rate, so an increase of 50p in child benefit and in the family credit child credit rates would give an overall increase of £1 per child.

The estimated net benefit cost in 1988-89 and in 1989-90 of a 50p increase in child benefit, assuming:

(a) a corresponding increase in the Income Support child rates and no change in Family Credit child rates, would be around £300 million in each year;

(b) a corresponding increase in the Income Support child rates and Family Credit child credit rates, would be around £330 million in each year;

(c) a corresponding increase in the Family Credit child credit rates and no change in Income Support rates, would be around £280 million in each year;

(d) no change in Income Support or Family Credit child credit rates, would be around £250 million in each year.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of claimants of unemployment-related benefits from whom benefit was withheld on grounds of lack of availability for work in each year since 1980; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of all claims disallowed in a manner consistent with the annual report of the chief adjudication officer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on claims disallowed by adjudication officers is in the table:

Disallowances of unemployment-related benefits made by Department of Employment adjudication officers

	Number of disallowances —availability and restricted availability	*Total number of disallowances*	*Disallowances under availability and restricted availability as percentage of total*
1980	52,426	949,477	6
1981	49,446	892,198	6
1982	62,015	943,553	7
1983	57,237	977,978	6
1984	49,043	962,323	5
1985	53,680	999,441	5
1986	68,773	1,081,394	6
1987	101,774	1,078,819	9
1988	48,290	480,723	10

Note: Figures for 1988 are for the period 1 January 1988-30 June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the grounds of refusal of unemployment-related benefits in a manner consistent with the reports of the chief adjudication officer; and if he will give the number of claims disallowed on each ground in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested on claims disallowed by adjudication officers is in the table.

Disallowance of unemployment-related benefits made by Department of Employment adjudication officers

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*[1]
Normal idle day/Full extent normal	781	1,183	1,914	1,912	1,962	1,773	1,862	1,731	631
Leaving employment voluntarily	350,303	245,779	255,822	261,284	281,237	298,208	314,229	328,424	140,368
Misconduct	134,870	103,172	96,318	94,696	93,847	98,738	99,502	98,004	45,769
Payment in lieu of notice or remuneration	181,578	242,975	232,436	232,355	194,643	196,394	215,831	179,436	84,102
Delayed claim	83,781	81,289	94,754	104,478	109,378	125,241	152,212	161,001	73,079
Whether unemployed	25,277	31,205	39,983	47,596	53,639	56,872	63,719	59,167	25,707
Dependency	12,880	12,488	11,157	9,411	6,186	5,570	4,326	3,333	1,206
Availability	40,835	39,642	52,725	50,243	43,465	48,020	61,402	85,319	38,141
Engaged in employment	27,751	43,034	65,350	96,760	84,371	71,676	59,361	37,562	12,699
Restricted availability	11,591	9,804	9,290	6,994	5,578	5,660	7,371	16,455	10,149
Refusal of suitable employment	8,963	4,779	2,652	1,883	1,965	2,296	3,187	4,321	2,938
Premature termination of training	447	366	1,274	1,249	9,257	7,008	6,322	6,496	2,822
Recognised or customary holiday	2,431	3,218	4,090	5,725	6,976	7,254	7,676	7,944	3,606
Seasonal worker	3,410	3,274	3,995	5,015	5,781	6,185	6,658	5,723	1,456
Earnings-related supplement	940	1,141	22	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other	63,639	68,849	73,015	59,626	73,295	75,556	83,502	83,903	38,050
Totals	949,477	892,198	943,553	977,978	962,323	999,441	1,081,394	1,078,819	480,723

[1] Figures for 1988 are for the period 1 January 1988 to 30 June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of claimants of unemployment benefit in each year since 1980 who were claimants for a second or subsequent period of unemployment benefit; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of the total number of successful claimants of unemployment benefit in each year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

ENERGY

Renewable Energy

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the per capita expenditure on renewable energy in *(a)* Greece and *(b)* Spain; and what was the expenditure by his Department in the comparable period.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Per capita expenditure on renewable energy in Greece and Spain in 1987 is estimated to be around £0·43 and £0·20 respectively. Based on the Department's expenditure on renewable energy over the same period, the United Kingdom figure would be £0·26. The Department's programme is, however, a collaborative programme with industry and the generating boards, and substantial work not directly connected with our programme is under way. Taking all these expenditures into account, the per capita expenditure on renewable energy in the United Kingdom is around £0·70.

North Sea Offshore Installations

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *682*, if he will undertake an assessment of whether all the parties to joint operating agreements who will ultimately be responsible for the costs of abandonment of North sea offshore installations will be able to meet their commitments; whether sureties were taken out to ensure that there would be no cost to the taxpayer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: One of the primary purposes of the Petroleum Act 1987 was to protect the taxpayer against the risk of the parties to joint operating agreements (the JOA parties) defaulting on their financial obligations for abandonment. The obligations upon the JOA parties are joint; if one or more of them defaults, the others must meet the whole obligation. Further, the Secretary of State may extend the abandonment obligation to associates, including parents and subsidiaries, of the JOA parties. Once an abandonment programme has been approved, if the Secretary of State is not satisfied that a company will be capable of discharging its obligations under it, he may require the company to take such action as he may specify, for example forfeiting oil to the Government.

Sellafield (Reprocessing)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the expected total costs of the Sellafield thermal oxide reprocessing plant once completed; and what is the estimated running costs of its first year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The expected total cost of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield is some £1,800 million. It is too early to estimate precisely the running costs for its first year.

Sellafield (Radioactive Emissions)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the expected minimum and maximum levels of radioactive emissions per year from the Sellafield plant; what type of emissions they will be; and what radioactive levels will make up such emissions.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Discharges of radioactivity from the Sellafield plant are subject to conditions of authorisations issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The current authorisations in respect of discharges to sea and air came into force on 1 July 1986 and 1 January 1988 respectively. Both include limits on the quantities of specified radionuclides and groups of radionuclides to be discharged within specified periods of time. They also require the use of the best practicable means to limit the activity of the waste discharged.

BNFL publishes annual reports on radioactive discharges and monitoring of the environment. These contain full details of the types and quantities of radionuclides discharged from Sellafield (and other BNFL sites), and demonstrate compliance with the authorisations. The most recent report, in respect of 1987, was published in November 1988; this is in the Library of the House.

Sellafield (Radioactive Waste)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much low, medium and high-level radioactive waste is presently stored at Sellafield; in what form; and what is its final destination.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At 1 January 1988 a total of 1,250 cu m of high-level waste and 33,000 cu m of intermediate-level waste were stored at Sellafield. Low-level waste is not stored, but is disposed of to the Drigg disposal site as it arises.

High-level waste is stored as a liquid in high-integrity, cooled, stainless steel storage tanks. Intermediate-level wastes, in the form of fuel element cladding, sludges, resins, flocs and other miscellaneous solid waste from reprocessing operations, are stored in tanks, silos and purpose-built stores.

It is intended to vitrify high-level waste and to encapsulate intermediate-level waste in a cement matrix for further interim storage. Both processes will commence in mid-1990.

Reprocessing contracts with overseas customers entered into since 1976 include an option to return the resulting wastes to those overseas customers and we intend that these options should be exercised. Other wastes will be disposed of in suitable geological repositories in the United Kingdom.

Energy Efficiency Office

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what level of funding the Energy Efficiency Office has received in the years 1985-87 inclusive.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 8 December 1988 at column *327*.

Appliances (Energy Consumption)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to introduce legislation requiring labelling of appliances and their energy consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 16 May 1988 at column *299*.

Sellafield (Plutonium Discharges)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, how much plutonium, in what chemical forms and by which routes, has been discharged into the Irish Sea by the Sellafield plant *(a)* since it began operating and *(b)* in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Liquid discharges from Sellafield contain very small quantities of nuclear materials, including plutonium. These are discharged to the sea through pipelines provided for the purpose, and are subject to conditions of authorisations granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The amount of plutonium included in these discharges since operations began in 1951 until the end of 1987 was 730 terabequerels, expressed as alpha activity.

The quantity discharged in each of the years since 1974 is as follows:

Year	*Plutonium (alpha activity) terabequerels*
1974	46
1975	44
1976	47
1977	36
1978	58
1979	50
1980	26·9
1981	20·0
1982	20·7
1983	11·6
1984	10·9
1985	3·4
1986	2·7
1987	1·3

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will make available the regulatory framework under which the electricity supply industry in England and Wales will operate after privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have today made copies of the draft licences available to Members of the Standing Committee considering the Electricity Bill, and placed copies in the Library of both Houses accompanied by explanatory notes. The draft licences are those for public electricity suppliers (PESs), which will be the successors to the area electricity boards, with an obligation to supply in their designated areas; other, "second tier", suppliers who may be licensed to supply specific premises or types of premises; generators, including independent generators and the successors to the Central Electricity Generating Board; and the transmission company.

The licences contain conditions restricting the level of charges (for the PES and transmission companies) and providing for third parties to have access to the transmission or distribution systems of all licensees. All licences contain conditions relating to technical and operating standards, arrangements for ensuring security of fuel supply and consultation on employee health and safety. All except the licences for second tier suppliers and independent generators contain conditions prohibiting cross-subsidy or discrimination, and the PES licence additionally makes important provision for aspects of consumer relations and standards of service. All licensees will be required to provide information to the Director General of Electricity Supply and to pay fees to cover regulatory costs.

War-time Cremations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what estimates he has made of the amount of fuel to be required for war-time cremation by local authorities;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *47*, how he proposes to make special provision of fuel stocks for use by local authorities for war-time cremation; what is the nature of the fuel to be provided; how much will be available; and when he anticipates issuing guidance to local authorities on the matter.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These questions are hypothetical, but we anticipate no difficulty in meeting the requirements of local authorities in this matter.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the provision of fuel stocks for use by local authorities in the carrying out of war-time cremations was last discussed at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's petroleum planning committee; and when the matter was last discussed with the petroleum industry's oil emergency committee.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The matter has not been discussed with the oil industry emergency committee. Discussions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation petroleum planning committee are classified.

HEALTH

Grading

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by district health authority in England and Wales the number of midwives on each grade of the previous grading structure and the number of midwives on each grade of the new grading structure, identifying separately hospital-based midwives and community midwives.

Mr. Mellor: The information which is available is given in the tables. The information which is held centrally does not identify hospital-based midwives and community midwives separately.

Staff midwives, midwifery sister II, midwifery sister I, senior nurse 8 (midwife), senior nurse 7 (midwife) and tutor midwife
Numbers on each of the old grades before assimilation to the new clinical structure

Region and District	*Staff midwives*	*Numbers on each of the old grades*				
		Midwifery sister II	*Midwifery sister I*	*Senior nurse 8 (midwife)*	*Senior nurse 7 (midwife)*	*Tutor midwife*
Northern						
Hartlepool	26·00	28·00	—	—	1·00	—
North Tees	45·00	43·00	—	1·00	—	1·00
South Tees	87·00	102·00	—	4·00	1·00	3·00
East Cumbria	45·00	25·00	1·00	—	1·00	1·00
South Cumbria	24·00	55·00	—	1·00	1·00	1·00
West Cumbria	28·00	35·00	—	3·00	1·00	1·00

Region and District	Staff midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery sister II	Midwifery sister I	Senior nurse 8 (midwife)	Senior nurse 7 (midwife)	Tutor midwife
Darlington	35·00	22·00	—	3·00	—	1·00
Durham	35·00	33·00	—	—	1·00	1·00
North West Durham	22·00	18·00	—	1·00	1·00	—
South West Durham	27·00	33·00	—	—	3·00	—
Northumberland	33·00	71·00	—	4·00	2·00	2·00
Gateshead	24·00	38·00	—	2·00	—	—
Newcastle	82·00	90·00	—	9·00	—	6·00
North Tynside	26·00	36·00	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	24·00	36·00	—	—	2·00	—
Sunderland	83·00	39·00	—	3·00	3·00	1·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	646·00	704·00	1·00	31·00	17·00	18·00

Region and District	Staff midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery sister II	Midwifery sister I	Senior nurse 8 (midwife)	Senior nurse 7 (midwife)	Tutor midwife
Yorkshire						
Hull	27·00	65·50	—	4·00	2·00	3·00
East Yorkshire	22·20	42·30	3·00	—	1·00	—
Grimsby	60·60	30·30	—	—	—	1·00
Scunthorpe	17·50	41·50	—	1·00	3·00	0·50
Northallerton	23·20	14·40	—	1·00	—	—
York	37·50	39·30	2·0	2·00	1·00	4·00
Scarborough	37·00	33·00	—	—	1·00	1·00
Harrowgate	30·40	34·20	3·90	—	—	—
Bradford	70·10	68·90	3·00	4·00	4·00	3·00
Airedale	31·00	31·00	1·00	1·00	—	2·00
Calderdale	48·10	44·50	1·00	1·00	2·00	2·00
Huddersfield	32.80	43·20	—	3·00	1·00	2·00
Dewsbury	33·00	54·50	—	2·00	1·00	2·60
Leeds Western	36·40	83·00	—	—	1·00	3·00
Leeds Eastern	55·00	95·10	—	24·00	3·00	4·80
Wakefield	33·10	41·00	—	3·00	1·00	2·50
Pontefract	43·00	50·00	—	3·00	2·00	2·50
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	637·90	811·70	13·90	49·0	23·00	33·90

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Trent						
North Derbyshire	48·33	62·61	—	3·00	3·00	3·00
Southern Derbyshire	50·00	106·13	2·00	11·00	1·00	6·00
Leicestershire	122·50	104·15	—	10·00	1·00	5·00
North Lincolnshire	39·57	41·99	—	—	1·00	2·00
South Lincolnshire	41·89	67·00	—	—	3·00	3·00
Bassetlaw	12·91	8·69	13·00	2·00	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	47·42	66·63	—	—	3·00	2·66
Nottingham	120·82	153·10	—	7·00	10·93	8·00
Barnsley	26·82	52·43	—	—	—	2·50
Doncaster	55·70	74·30	2·00	—	3·00	3·00
Rotherham	35·54	55·54	2·00	—	4·00	2·00
Sheffield	100·40	80·94	—	5·00	7·00	8·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	701·90	873·51	19·00	38·00	36·93	45·16

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
East Anglia						
Cambridge	65·15	45·53	—	—	4·00	4·00
Peterborough	43·00	54·50	3·00	3·00	1·00	3·00
West Suffolk	39·58	46·12	—	3·00	1·00	2·00
East Suffolk	41·60	59·42	—	4·00	3·00	2·00
Norwich	71·77	98·33	—	3·00	2·00	4·00
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	19·43	44·58	—	2·00	—	1·00
West Norfolk and Wisbech	32·11	39·67	—	1·00	1·00	1·00

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Huntingdon	37·41	30·77	1·00	2·00	1·00	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	350·05	418·92	4·00	18·00	13·00	17·00

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
North West Thames						
North Bedfordshire	44·47	49·39	—	—	3·00	4·00
South Bedfordshire	45·48	78·82	—	2·00	4·00	3·00
North Hertfordshire	38·13	35·22	—	—	—	—
East Hertfordshire	27·24	46·90	—	4·00	1·00	2·00
North West Hertfordshire	42·35	40·89	—	—	3·00	4·00
South West Hertfordshire	30·60	37·22	19·00	—	2·00	5·00
Barnet	40·48	47·92	—	7·00	1·00	4·00
Harrow	44·50	19·00	—	3·00	—	3·00
Hillingdon	36·20	59·40	—	—	2·00	1·00
Hounslow and Spelthorne	76·15	64·53	—	2·00	3·00	1·50
Ealing	35·53	33·60	—	2·00	2·00	1·50
Parkside	86·41	73·52	—	2·00	1·00	2·00
Riverside	62·13	65·00	—	—	6·00	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	609·67	651·41	19·00	22·00	28·00	31·00

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
North East Thames						
Basildon and Thurrock	56·90	61·30	—	2·00	5·00	—
Mid Essex	47·20	54·00	—	2·00	2·00	1·10
North East Essex	58·70	59·80	—	—	5·00	3·00
West Essex	30·30	68·80	—	2·90	4·00	3·00
Southend	48·70	58·54	—	3·00	—	2·00
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	60·80	85·90	—	5·00	3·00	4·00
Hampstead	26·50	42·20	—	3·00	1·00	—
Bloomsbury	66·00	51·00	—	—	—	—
Islington	52·50	42·30	—	2·00	3·00	2·00
City and Hackney	82·90	57·10	—	4·00	1·00	3·00
Newham	67·10	44·20	—	3·00	1·00	2·00
Tower Hamlets	62·00	35·00	—	—	4·00	3·00
Enfield	53·20	47·00	—	4·00	1·00	2·00
Haringey	51·10	44·00	—	2·00	2·00	2·50
Redbridge	60·00	50·00	—	5·00	1·00	3·00
Waltham Forest	51·90	34·10	1·00	—	5·00	3·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	875·80	835·24	1·00	37·90	38·00	33·60

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
South East Thames						
Brighton	37·00	18·92	—	—	4·00	1·50
Eastbourne	30·00	15·00	—	—	2·00	1·50
Hastings	24·89	14·70	2·00	—	1·00	3·00
South East Kent	39·80	27·70	—	—	2·00	2·00
Canterbury and Thanet	56·00	32·00	—	2·00	2·00	3·00
Dartford and Gravesham	64·40	34·60	—	3·00	2·00	3·00
Maidstone	28·54	18·71	—	2·00	2·00	—
Medway	57·69	22·32	—	1·00	4·00	5·03
Tunbridge Wells	46·34	36·10	4·00	—	2·00	3·50
Bexley	51·00	26·00	—	3·00	2·00	5·00
Greenwich	67·20	17·60	1·00	2·00	1·00	4·25
Bromley	49·18	27·55	—	5·00	1·00	5·00
West Lambeth	76·00	36·00	—	5·00	1·00	—
Camberwell	65·00	28·50	—	3·00	2·00	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	90·30	52·00	1·00	6·00	3·00	4·50

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	783·34	407·70	8·00	32·00	31·00	41·28

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
South West Thames						
North West Surrey	40·63	45·80	1·00	3·00	1·00	3·00
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	37·10	37·19	—	—	2·00	2·00
South West Surrey	24·66	46·17	—	—	2·00	2·72
Mid Surrey	30·80	29·00	—	—	3·00	3·00
East Surrey	22·55	33·95	—	1·00	2·00	1·00
Chichester	29·40	30·00	—	—	2·00	1·00
Mid Downs	45·81	65·15	—	—	4·00	3·00
Worthing	31·00	32·00	—	—	2·00	2·00
Croydon	82·50	28·40	2·00	4·00	1·00	3·00
Kingston and Esher	51·53	34·34	—	—	3·00	1·53
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	29·38	24·92	—	—	2·00	—
Wandsworth	70·37	39·47	—	3·00	1·00	3·60
Merton and Sutton	62·68	47·51	—	—	5·00	4·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	558·41	493·90	3·00	11·00	30·00	29·85

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Wessex						
East Dorset	112·48	60·00	—	3·00	1·00	10·00
West Dorset	24·77	30·50	—	—	1·00	—
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	95·30	112·80	—	2·00	3·00	3·50
Southampton and South West Hampshire	73·45	87·18	—	2·00	3·00	4·00
Winchester	41·76	51·20	—	3·00	3·00	2·00
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	37·46	46·53	5·00	—	—	2·40
Salisbury	36·43	25·00	3·00	9·00	1·00	—
Swindon	59·30	47·45	1·00	1·00	12·00	3·50
Bath	59·08	93·61	13·10	2·00	1·00	2·50
Isle of Wight	24·00	21·80	—	—	1·00	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	564·03	576·07	22·10	22·00	26·00	27·90

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Oxford						
East Berkshire	64·09	73·92	—	4·00	3·00	5·00
West Berkshire	53·31	82·14	—	8·00	2·00	5·00
Aylesbury Vale	18·39	41·72	—	2·00	—	—
Wycombe	29·58	50·80	—	3·00	3·00	4·00
Milton Keynes	32·00	45·00	—	1·00	2·00	1·00
Kettering	50·49	56·29	—	4·00	1·00	0·80
Northampton	47·88	89·85	1·75	2·00	—	5·24
Oxfordshire	100·00	114·00	1·00	3·00	7·00	4·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	395·74	553·72	2·75	27·00	18·00	25·04

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
South Western						
Bristol and Weston	84·23	68·94	1·00	—	3·00	—
Frenchay	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southmead	76·61	75·35	2·00	—	6·00	5·00
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	75·07	106·66	3·00	2·00	—	3·00
Exeter	41·94	49·13	2·00	6·00	—	1·00
North Devon	10·79	26·74	—	3·00	—	—
Plymouth	74·30	77·11	1·00	2·00	2·00	5·00
Torbay	31·09	37·64	—	—	1·00	1·00
Cheltenham	30·26	28·80	1·00	1·00	1·00	1·00
Gloucester	82·13	45·65	3·00	2·00	2·00	2·00
Somerset	63·83	60·19	—	6·67	1·00	5·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	570·65	576·21	13·00	22·67	16·00	23·00

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
West Midlands						
Bromsgrove and Redditch	27·47	34·44	—	2·00	—	—
Herefordshire	22·02	30·63	—	—	3·00	1·00
Kidderminster and District	2·49	22·82	1·00	—	—	—
Worcester and District	40·34	61·75	—	—	—	2·00
Shropshire	33·59	100·03	1·00	2·00	4·00	—
Mid Staffordshire	35·01	64·09	1·00	3·00	—	1·00
North Staffordshire	123·12	124·62	—	2·00	5·00	5·33
South East Staffordshire	36·24	46·00	—	1·00	—	2·00
Rugby	15·50	18·33	1·00	—	—	—
North Warwickshire	48·32	24·31	—	1·00	2·00	2·00
South Warwickshire	36·70	41·84	—	1·00	3·00	2·00
Central Birmingham	103·19	72·00	—	2·00	1·00	5·00
East Birmingham	—	—	2·00	—	1·00	—
North Birmingham	50·44	50·74	—	1·00	1·00	3·00
South Birmingham	46·21	63·66	—	9·00	—	3·00
West Birmingham	42·51	88·93	—	1·00	2·00	1·53
Coventry	67·51	40·00	—	4·00	3·00	4·0
Dudley	20·57	89·17	—	4·00	1·00	2·64
Sandwell	32·60	56·98	—	6·00	2·00	2·00
Solihull	80·31	70·91	1·00	5·00	1·00	4·00
Walsall	34·44	78·06	—	1·00	3·00	—
Wolverhampton	60·16	70·15	—	9·00	—	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	958·74	1,249·46	7·00	54·00	32·00	40·50

Region and District	Staff midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Mersey						
Chester	61·00	57·00	1·00	2·00	2·00	4·00
Crewe	38·00	29·00	1·00	2·00	1·00	2·00
Halton	—	17·00	—	—	1·00	—
Macclesfield	26·00	35·00	—	1·00	1·00	—
Warrington	43·00	42·00	—	—	3·00	2·00
Liverpool	84·00	140·00	2·00	4·00	2·00	4·00
St Helens and Knowsley	35·00	83·00	—	—	5·00	2·00
Southport and Formby	10·00	20·00	1·00	—	—	—
South Sefton	42·00	42·00	—	2·00	3·00	4·00
Wirral	56·00	93·00	3·00	1·00	5·00	3·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	395·00	558·00	8·00	12·00	23·0	21·00

Region and District	Staff midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (midwife)	Tutor Midwife
North Western						
Lancaster	17·71	32·00	—	1·00	2·00	1·00
Blackpool, Wyre and Flyde	32·88	53·97	—	—	1·00	2·00
Preston	75·70	48·20	—	6·00	4·00	3·00

Region and District	Staff midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	67·77	67·22	—	—	—	—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	49·00	57·00	—	6·00	1·00	3·00
West Lancashire	16·97	27·05	2·00	—	1·00	—
Chorley and South Ribble	12·06	30·68	—	1·00	1·00	—
Bolton	63·76	71·00	6·00	—	1·00	3·50
Bury	29·92	33·06	—	—	2·00	1·50
North Manchester	42·67	61·00	—	2·00	3·00	2·00
Central Manchester	69·00	59·00	—	1·00	2·00	6·00
South Manchester	64·40	113·20	—	—	—	—
Oldham	40·00	70·00	6·00	—	1·00	2·00
Rochdale	37·72	49·25	—	1·00	2·00	1·00
Salford	57·25	80·11	—	1·00	3·00	5·90
Stockport	44·24	84·43	—	3·00	6·00	4·00
Tameside and Glossop	62·00	74·00	—	—	—	—
Trafford	23·32	44·18	—	—	2·00	1·00
Wigan	44·98	87·72	—	—	6·00	3·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	851·35	1,143·07	14·00	22·00	38·00	38·90

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
SHAs						
The Hospital For Sick Children	—	—	—	—	—	—
The National Hospitals For Nervous Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	—	—	—	—	—	—
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Royal Marsden Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Eastman Dental Hospital	106·00	60·00	5·00	6·00	1·00	—
TOTAL	106·00	60·00	5·00	6·00	1·00	Nil

Region and District	Staff Midwives	Numbers on each of the old grades: Midwifery Sister II	Midwifery Sister I	Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	Tutor Midwife
Wales						
Gwent	62·03	113·36	—	5·00	5·00	4·00
Mid Glamorgan	80·77	162·72	1·00	8·00	5·00	3·00
West Glamorgan	111.07	94·24	1·00	4·00	2·00	2·60
South Glamorgan	85·93	93·46	—	3·00	6·00	7·53
Clwyd	84·97	85·03	—	6·00	3·00	1·00
Pembrokeshire	16·60	22·10	—	—	1·00	—
East Dyfed	27·57	37·00	—	—	0·50	6·80
Gwynedd	46·70	53·38	—	3·00	4·00	2·00
Powys	—	37·78	1·00	—	—	—
TOTAL	515·64	699·07	3·00	29·00	26·50	26·93

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Staff midwives, midwifery sister II, midwifery sister I, senior nurse 8 (midwife), senior nurse 7 (midwife) and tutor midwife
Numbers assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade: D	E	F	G	H	I	W.T.E. staff in post
Wales							
Gwent	10·00	6·71	46·36	104·32	10·00	12·00	189·39
Mid Glamorgan	10·00	30·14	47·38	147·97	16·00	9·00	260·49
West Glamorgan	6·00	45·69	59·38	96·24	1·00	7·60	215·91
South Glamorgan	17·00	31·89	44·54	79·96	8·00	14·53	195·92
Clwyd	6·00	15·99	70·85	69·16	10·00	8·00	180·00
Pembrokeshire	—	2·40	14·20	22·10	1·00	—	39·70
East Dyfed	—	26·57	2·00	36·00	6·80	0·50	71·87

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Gwynedd	6·00	39·70	3·50	49·88	5·00	5·00	109·08
Powys	—	—	26·73	10·05	2·00	—	38·78
Total	55·00	199·09	314·94	615·68	59·80	56·63	1,301·14

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Northern							
Hartlepool	1·00	25·00	10·00	18·00	1·00	—	55·00
North Tees	1·00	44·00	13·00	30·00	1·00	1·00	90·00
South Tees	3·00	84·00	49·00	53·00	4·00	4·00	197·00
East Cumbria	2·00	43·00	9·00	17·00	1·00	1·00	73·00
South Cumbria	1·00	17·00	17·00	41·00	3·00	3·00	82·00
West Cumbria	5·00	21·00	17·00	20·00	4·00	1·00	68·00
Darlington	8·00	27·00	5·00	17·00	3·00	1·00	61·00
Durham	2·00	30·00	7·00	28·00	2·00	1·00	70·00
North West Durham	3·00	19·00	4·00	15·00	—	1·00	42·00
South West Durham	1·00	26·00	9·00	24·00	2·00	1·00	63·00
Northumberland	1·00	24·00	24·00	53·00	5·00	5·00	112·00
Gateshead	2·00	22·00	12·00	26·00	2·00	—	64·00
Newcastle	3·00	56·00	48·00	61·00	6·00	13·00	187·00
North Tyneside	4·00	22·00	13·00	23·00	—	—	62·00
South Tyneside	2·00	22·00	5·00	30·00	3·00	—	62·00
Sunderland	5·00	78·00	19·00	20·00	6·00	1·00	129·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	44·00	560·00	261·00	476·00	43·00	33·00	1,417·00

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Yorkshire							
Hull	—	27·00	—	65·50	4·00	5·00	101·50
East Yorkshire	—	22·20	4·00	38·30	3·00	1·00	68·50
Grimsby	3·90	52·40	8·60	25·00	1·00	1·00	91·90
Scunthorpe	—	17·50	14·30	27·20	1·00	3·50	63·50
Northallerton	—	19·20	4·00	13·40	1·00	1·00	38·60
York	10·90	26·60	—	39·30	5·00	4·00	85·80
Scarborough	6·00	20·00	25·00	19·00	—	2·00	72·00
Harrogate	—	29·40	16·60	21·50	1·00	—	68·50
Bradford	—	70·10	31·60	39·30	7·00	5·00	153·00
Airedale	—	28·00	3·00	30·00	2·00	3·00	66·00
Calderdale	2·00	46·10	—	44·50	2·00	4·00	98·60
Huddersfield	—	32·80	—	43·20	3·00	3·00	82·00
Dewsbury	3·20	29·80	18·50	36·00	1·00	4·60	93·10
Leeds Western	4·40	32·00	26·00	55·00	2·00	4·00	123·40
Leeds Eastern	5·90	49·10	22·20	72·90	—	31·80	181·90
Wakefield	—	33·10	7·90	33·10	3·00	3·50	80·60
Pontefract	7·00	36·00	19·00	30·00	2·00	6·50	100·50
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	43·30	571·30	200·70	633·20	38·00	82·90	1,569·40

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Trent							
North Derbyshire	7·70	36·39	22·55	44·30	1·00	8·00	119·94
Southern Derbyshire	16·89	33·11	40·85	72·28	6·00	7·00	176·13
Leicestershire	2·32	120·18	6·60	97·55	3·00	13·00	242·65
North Lincolnshire	4·19	33·58	14·40	28·89	1·50	2·00	84·56
South Lincolnshire	3·50	36·39	20·50	48·50	—	6·00	114·89
Bassetlaw	—	12·91	9·69	12·00	2·00	—	36·60
Central Nottinghamshire	10·64	36·78	7·37	59·26	—	5·66	119·71
Nottingham	23·00	97·82	23·13	136·97	9·00	9·93	299·85
Barnsley	3·51	23·31	12·43	40·00	—	2·50	81·75
Doncaster	21·23	34·47	38·30	36·00	2·00	6·00	138·00
Rotherham	10·16	25·38	21·88	35·66	1·00	5·00	99·08
Sheffield	12·00	87·35	53·59	28·40	3·00	17·00	201·34
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	115·14	577·67	271·29	639·81	28·50	82·09	1,714·50

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
East Anglia							
Cambridge	2·00	60·65	17·50	30·53	—	8·00	118·68
Peterborough	—	42·00	19·00	37·50	4·00	5·00	107·50
West Suffolk	—	39·58	8·00	38·12	3·00	3·00	91·70
East Suffolk	—	37·85	5·75	57·42	4·00	5·00	110·02
Norwich	9·00	62·77	5·80	93·53	3·00	5·00	179·10
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	0·10	16·80	13·11	34·00	2·00	1·00	67·01
West Norfolk and Wisbech	3·00	27·52	9·46	30·80	1·00	3·00	74·78
Huntingdon	1·50	35·91	5·47	25·30	3·00	1·00	72·18
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	15·60	323·08	84·09	347·20	20·00	31·00	820·97

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
North West Thames							
North Bedfordshire	4·00	19·54	20·93	49·39	—	7·00	100·86
South Bedfordshire	3·00	38·41	31·51	51·38	2·00	7·00	133·30
North Hertfordshire	3·50	34·63	—	35·22	—	—	73·35
East Hertfordshire	2·00	10·24	21·91	39·99	5·00	2·00	81·14
North West Hertfordshire	4·00	29·00	11·35	37·89	1·00	7·00	90·24
South West Hertfordshire	3·00	27·60	24·22	31·00	3·00	5·00	93·82
Barnet	3·00	29·98	15·92	39·50	1·00	11·00	100·40
Harrow	3·50	41·00	5·00	14·00	3·00	3·00	69·50
Hillingdon	3·00	33·20	22·30	37·10	2·00	1·00	98·60
Hounslow and Spelthorne	4·50	51·65	27·00	57·53	4·00	2·50	147·18
Ealing	3·00	28·53	9·60	28·00	2·00	3·50	74·63
Parkside	6·00	60·94	48·35	44·64	2·00	3·00	164·93
Riverside	5·00	57·13	36·00	29·00	2·00	4·00	133·13
Blood transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	47·50	461·85	274·09	494·64	27·00	56·00	1,361·08

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each grade						W.T.E. staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
North East Thames							
Basildon and Thurrock	4·00	41·90	17·00	54·70	4·60	3·00	125·20
Mid Essex	3·00	32·20	15·00	51·00	—	5·10	106·30
North East Essex	4·70	42·00	20·80	49·00	2·00	8·00	126·50
West Essex	2·00	15·10	30·10	52·90	1·90	7·00	109·00
Southend	3·00	34·00	21·80	46·44	5·00	2·00	112·24
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	5·00	49·30	27·80	70·60	2·00	10·00	164·70
Hampstead	2·00	18·50	17·40	30·80	3·00	1·00	72·70
Bloomsbury	5·00	43·00	30·00	37·00	2·00	—	117·00
Islington	5·00	35·00	16·50	38·30	4·00	3·00	101·80
City and Hackney	5·00	57·70	26·20	50·10	4·00	5·00	148·00
Newham	5·00	46·00	20·10	40·20	2·00	4·00	117·30
Tower Hamlets	3·00	44·00	15·00	35·00	—	7·00	104·00
Enfield	4·60	35·60	18·90	41·10	4·00	3·00	107·20
Haringey	4·00	34·10	13·70	43·30	2·00	4·50	101·60
Redbridge	4·00	46·00	20·00	40·00	—	9·00	119·00
Waltham Forest	3·00	31·90	17·00	34·10	2·90	7·00	95·00
Blood transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	62·30	606·30	327·30	714·54	38·50	78·60	1,827·54

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. Staff in Post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
South East Thames							
Brighton	9·00	26·00	12·92	8·00	1·00	4·50	61·42
Eastbourne	3·00	18·50	12·75	9·75	1·00	3·50	48·50
Hastings	3·00	18·04	7·35	10·20	3·00	4·00	45·59
South East Kent	3·00	30·80	8·00	25·70	—	4·00	71·50
Canterbury and Thanet	7·00	38·00	11·00	30·00	4·00	5·00	95·00
Dartford and Gravesham	7·00	43·00	20·40	28·60	5·00	3·00	107·00
Maidstone	4·00	18·15	10·10	15·00	3·00	1·00	51·25
Medway	10·00	36·09	19·92	14·00	—	10·03	90·04
Tunbridge Wells	7·00	32·34	13·75	28·35	5·00	5·50	91·94
Bexley	7·00	24·00	28·00	17·00	1·00	10·00	87·00
Greenwich	7·00	50·20	15·60	12·00	3·00	5·25	93·05
Bromley	4·00	39·93	17·00	15·80	3·00	8·00	87·73
West Lambeth	4·00	55·00	26·00	26·00	5·00	2·00	118·00

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. Staff in Post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Camberwell	8·00	41·92	24·58	19·00	3·00	2·00	98·50
Lewisham and North Southwark	10·00	65·50	30·80	36·00	6·00	8·50	156·80
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	93·00	537·47	258·17	295·40	43·00	76·28	1,303·32

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. Staff in Post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
South West Thames							
North West Surrey	4·00	29·63	12·00	38·80	3·00	7·00	94·43
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	6·09	26·01	10·00	32·19	—	4·00	78·29
South West Surrey	5·00	14·66	11·00	35·17	5·00	4·72	75·55
Mid Surrey	3·00	18·80	11·00	23·00	4·00	6·00	65·80
East Surrey	2·00	13·55	16·80	22·15	3·00	3·00	60·50
Chichester	4·00	24·40	13·00	17·00	1·00	3·00	62·40
Mid Downs	10·33	24·57	17·78	58·28	—	7·00	117·96
Worthing	3·00	23·00	10·00	27·00	—	4·00	67·00
Croydon	11·00	53·30	22·60	24·00	2·00	8·00	120·90
Kingston and Esher	5·00	36·54	19·33	25·00	—	4·53	90·40
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	4·32	21·06	6·00	22·92	—	2·00	56·30
Wandsworth	9·40	44·97	21·75	32·72	1·00	7·60	117·44
Merton and Sutton	8·00	37·77	33·79	28·63	2·00	9·00	119·19
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	75·14	368·26	205·05	386·86	21·00	69·85	1,126·16

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. Staff in Post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Wessex							
East Dorset	33·95	78·53	3·00	57·00	4·00	10·0	186·48
West Dorset	6·00	18·77	11·00	19·50	—	1·00	56·27
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	20·60	63·70	21·50	98·30	4·00	8·50	216·60
Southampton and South West Hampshire	14·00	36·27	40·30	70·06	4·00	5·00	169·63
Winchester	5·00	35·63	7·13	45·20	2·00	6·00	100·96
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	4·00	21·00	15·46	41·53	7·00	2·40	91·39
Salisbury	8·00	23·43	9·00	21·00	4·00	9·00	74·43
Swindon	5·00	52·31	5·99	44·45	4·00	12·50	124·25
Bath	6·00	37·95	27·13	87·71	7·00	5·50	171·29
Isle of Wight	2·00	16·00	9·80	18·00	1·00	—	46·80
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	104·55	383·59	150·31	502·75	37·00	59·90	1,238·10

Region and District	Numbers transferred to each new grade						W.T.E. Staff in Post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Oxford							
East Berkshire	9·00	53·09	10·95	66·97	—	10·00	150·01
West Berkshire	7·00	42·00	5·31	83·14	—	13·00	150·45
Aylesbury Vale	—	16·39	16·86	24·86	2·00	2·00	62·11
Wycombe	4·00	22·58	8·09	45·71	3·00	7·00	90·38
Milton Keynes	—	28·00	5·00	43·00	1·00	4·00	81·00
Kettering	6·00	44·49	8·44	46·92	0·93	5·80	112·58
Northampton	10·00	37·88	51·13	39·47	1·00	7·24	146·72
Oxfordshire	13·00	78·00	29·00	93·00	2·00	14·00	229·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	49·00	322·43	134·78	443·07	9·93	63·04	1,022·25

Region and District	Members transferred to each new grade D	E	F	G	H	I	W.T.E. Staff in Post
South Western							
Bristol and Weston	3·00	52·54	27·69	68·94	2·00	3·00	157·17
Frenchay	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southmead	—	37·67	38·94	75·35	2·00	11·00	164·96
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	12·12	43·16	27·24	85·21	20·00	2·00	189·73
Exeter	—	40·30	23·77	29·00	—	7·00	100·07
North Devon	—	4·00	13·79	20·74	1·00	1·00	40·53
Plymouth	3·31	71·39	—	77·11	4·00	6·00	161·81
Torbay	—	27·09	10·00	31·64	1·00	1·00	70·73
Cheltenham	—	8·53	14·75	36·78	—	3·00	63·06
Gloucester	27·91	42·01	21·24	38·62	1·00	6·00	136·78
Somerset	1·65	62·18	6·58	54·61	6·67	5·00	136·69
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	47·99	388·87	184·00	518·00	37·67	45·00	1,221·53

Region and District	Members transferred to each new grade D	E	F	G	H	I	W.T.E. Staff in Post
West Midlands							
Bromsgrove and Redditch	5·80	21·67	10·44	24·00	2·00	—	63·91
Herefordshire	2·00	20·02	8·96	21·67	2·00	2·00	56·65
Kidderminster and District	0·45	—	13·09	10·77	2·00	—	26·31
Worcester and District	—	39·34	24·53	36·22	2·00	2·00	104·09
Shropshire	—	17·04	16·55	101·03	1·00	5·00	140·62
Mid Staffordshire	6·20	28·81	19·07	46·02	2·00	2·00	104·10
North Staffordshire	9·50	112·98	48·67	76·59	2·00	10·33	260·07
South East Staffordshire	3·83	26·41	14·28	37·72	1·00	2·00	85·24
Rugby	0·72	14·78	6·33	12·00	1·00	—	34·83
North Warwickshire	7·34	40·98	23·31	2·00	2·00	2·00	77·63
South Warwickshire	—	36·70	7·00	34·84	1·00	5·00	84·54
Central Birmingham	13·12	50·66	64·41	47·00	—	8·00	183·19
East Birmingham	—	—	—	—	1·00	2·00	3·00
North Birmingham	7·00	43·44	17·82	32·92	1·00	4·00	106·18
South Birmingham	8·00	35·83	31·44	35·60	6·00	5·00	121·87
West Birmingham	9·00	28·86	38·52	55·06	2·00	2·53	135·97
Coventry	—	67·51	10·00	26·00	5·00	10·00	118·51
Dudley	1·70	18·87	48·32	41·85	4·00	2·64	117·38
Sandwell	—	32·60	12·58	44·40	3·00	7·00	99·58
Solihull	9·21	40·10	51·41	52·50	—	9·00	162·22
Walsall	1·41	21·31	40·98	48·80	1·00	3·00	116·50
Wolverhampton	3·40	50·96	29·65	48·30	—	7·00	139·31
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	88·68	748·87	537·36	835·29	41·00	90·50	2,341·70

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade D	E	F	G	H	I	W.T.E. staff in post
Mersey							
Chester	9·00	31·00	54·00	24·00	2·00	7·00	127·00
Crewe	9·00	28·00	14·00	16·00	1·00	5·00	73·00
Halton	—	—	2·00	15·00	—	1·00	18·00
Macclesfield	—	14·00	21·00	26·00	2·00	—	63·00
Warrington	7·00	26·00	11·00	41·00	—	5·00	90·00
Liverpool	1·00	50·00	77·00	96·00	5·00	7·00	125·00
St. Helens and Knowsley	—	15·00	41·00	61·00	1·00	7·00	125·00
Southport and Formby	—	9·00	10·00	12·00	—	—	31·00
South Sefton	5·00	37·00	19·00	22·00	3·00	7·00	93·00
Wirral	6·00	15·00	52·00	77·00	2·00	9·00	161·00
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	37·00	225·00	301·00	390·0	16·00	48·00	1,017·00

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade D	E	F	G	H	I	W.T.E. staff in post
North Western							
Lancaster	7·71	10·00	10·00	22·00	—	4·00	53·71
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	8·00	24·88	14·07	39·90	—	3·00	89·85
Preston	7·40	68·30	20·40	32·80	1·00	7·00	136·90

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade						
	D	E	F	G	H	I	W.T.E. staff in post
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	—	45·65	61·34	28·00	—	—	134·99
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	6·00	43·00	11·00	50·00	2·00	4·00	116·00
West Lancashire	—	16·97	13·30	12·75	4·00	—	47·02
Chorley and South Ribble	—	12·06	4·70	26·98	1·00	—	44·74
Bolton	9·00	48·76	26·00	51·00	4·00	6·50	145·26
Bury	8·00	21·92	3·60	28·46	1·00	3·50	66·48
North Manchester	5·00	37·17	19·50	41·00	1·00	7·00	110·67
Central Manchester	10·00	55·09	27·38	35·53	1·00	8·00	137·00
South Manchester	12·20	52·20	65·15	47·05	1·00	—	177·60
Oldham	5·00	35·00	26·00	48·00	2·00	3·00	119·00
Rochdale	4·00	31·72	11·81	39·44	1·00	3·00	90·97
Salford	11·00	46·25	32·31	47·80	—	9·92	147·28
Stockport	11·00	33·24	18·64	62·79	4·00	12·00	141·67
Tameside and Glossop	—	62·00	19·00	53·00	2·00	—	136·00
Trafford	2·08	20·42	16·00	28·00	1·00	3·00	70·50
Wigan	2·00	27·76	51·98	50·96	—	9·00	141·70
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	108·39	692·39	452·18	745·46	26·00	82·92	2,107·34

Region and district	Numbers transferred to each new grade						WTE staff in post
	D	E	F	G	H	I	
SHAs							
The Hospital for Sick Children	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Royal Marsden Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	—	105·00	15·00	46·00	12·00	—	178·00
The Eastman Dental Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	105·00	15·00	46·00	12·00	—	178·00

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Hull district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Numbers of old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1st April 1988: Hull

Previous grade	Old code	Staff in post (whole-time equivalents)	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G[1]	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	NB01/11	511·50	463·90	47·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	NB21	11·10	—	11·10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	NB31	474·30	—	—	155·70	303·30	12·80	1·00	1·50	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	NB31	11·00	—	—	—	11·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	NB61	6·90	—	—	—	6·30	0·60	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	NB41-61	412·50	—	—	—	36·10	346·40	28·00	2·00	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	NB61	27·00	—	—	—	—	27·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	NB71	19·00	—	—	—	—	—	19·00	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	NBB1/91	291·40	—	—	—	—	—	94·70	188·90	7·80	—
Midwifery Sister II[2]	NB91	65·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	65·50	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	NB91	47·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	47·60	—	—
Nursing Sister I	NC01	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—
Midwifery Sister I	NB01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	NX01	47·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	46·30	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	NT01	28·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13·80	15·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	NT01	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	—

Previous grade	*Old code*	*Staff in post (whole-time equivalents)*	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade* A	B	C	D	E	F	G[1]	H	I
Senior Nurse 7	NT06	21·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21·90
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	NT06	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00
Clinical Teacher	NW01	2·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·90	—
Fieldwork Teacher	NW01	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	NB91	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·00	—
Tutor	NW11	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00
Tutor Midwife	NW11	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00
Post Enrolled	NB31	9·80	—	—	9·80	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basic Staff Nurse	NB61	30·50	—	—	—	23·60	6·90	—	—	—	—
Students Deputy Sister	NB71	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	NB91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	NQ00	29·00	—	—	—	13·00	14·00	—	—	—	2·00
Totals		2,082·00	463·90	58·70	165·50	393·30	407·70	142·70	351·80	52·50	45·90

NB: [1] Excludes some additional 'G' posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Northallerton Health Authority

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will place in the Library copies of the latest annual accounts and financial returns for Northallerton health authority;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the capital and revenue sums spent on all hospitals in the Northallerton health authority area for each of the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: Figures of revenue and capital expenditure for the Northallerton health authority are shown in the table.

For more detailed information on regional capital spending within the district and for copies of the authority's latest annual accounts and financial returns, which are generally presented to health authorities meeting in public session, I suggest the hon. Member contact the chairman of the Northallerton health authority.

Northallerton Health Authority

	Revenue expenditure (cash) *Hospital services* £000	*Total* £000	*Capital expenditure (cash)* *Total* £000
1983-84	8,015	11,498	892
1984-85	8,570	12,426	1,906
1985-86	9,024	13,017	4,650
1986-87	9,690	14,119	2,091
1987-88[1]	10,672	15,848	636

[1] Provisional figures (ie as yet subject to audit).
Source: Annual financial accounts of Northallerton Health Authority and Yorkshire Regional Health Authority (RHA).
Notes to the table:
1. The total expenditure figures include expenditure on hospital, community health and other services.
2. The total capital expenditure figures include sums in respect of district schemes recorded in the annual accounts of the Yorkshire RHA most of which relates to hospital services but details are not held centrally.
3. Revenue and capital expenditure incurred by Yorkshire RHA for the region as a whole is excluded. Expenditure on family practitioner services which is accounted for by family practitioner committees and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts is similarly excluded.

Meningitis

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research the Government are undertaking to discover how meningitis spreads.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health is funding a prospective case control study of meningococcal disease in eight west country health districts by Dr. Stanwell-Smith, Bristol and Western health authority. This study is looking at individual susceptibility to meningococcal disease.

The main agency through which the Government support medical research is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science. The MRC supports work into the epidemiology of meningitis at Oxford (Professor R. Moxon), and into the immunobiology of meningococcal infection at the MRC clinical research centre (Dr. Taylor-Robinson): the latter studies could, in the longer term, provide information on the spread of the disease.

Health in Old Age

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement of the progress of the health in old age programme; and what plans have been made for the future funding of the programme and its three constituent parts.

Mr. Freeman: The health in old age programme is one of the several programmes run by the Health Education Authority concerned with adult and family health, and exists to encourage a positive response to old age and to support informal carers of elderly people. It gives support to the King's Fund informal carers' project, the Centre for Health and Retirement Education and the Age Well Campaign. The authority is currently considering the programme's future funding arrangements as part of its operational planning for 1989-90.

Midwives (Vacancies)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the present vacancies for midwives in each of the regional health authorities covering London.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold such information centrally.

National Census

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will include a question about Gaelic and Welsh-speaking ability in any future national census to be conducted in England.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's proposals for the 1991 census in Great Britain were published in a White Paper (Cm. 430) on 19 July 1988. They do not include a question about Gaelic and Welsh-speaking ability in England.

There were many topics put forward which were considered but not included. Requests to include a question on Celtic languages throughout Great Britain and asking the Welsh language question outside Wales were excluded from the Government's proposals mainly because the arguments for including them were not considered strong enough compared with the cases for questions on other topics.

The topic content of any census after 1991 will be a matter for consideration at the appropriate time.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if households included in the proposed test census will be informed in advance that participation is voluntary.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. An information leaflet which states that the test is voluntary, but that its success depends on co-operation, will be delivered to each household in the test areas about two weeks before the day of the test.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the parliamentary constituencies affected by the test census planned for April.

Mr. Freeman: The areas selected for the 1989 census test cover parts of the following constituencies: Tooting, Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden, Perry Barr, Small Heath, Scarborough, Edinburgh South, Edinburgh Central, East Lothian, Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

Product Licences (Parallel Imports) Scheme

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements exist for the inspection of overseas manufacturing sites for products that are licensed under the Product Licences (Parallel Imports) Scheme in those European Community countries that are not a party to the pharmaceutical inspection convention.

Mr. Mellor: Overseas manufacturing sites for products which are the subject of the product licences (parallel imports) scheme are subject to inspection by the member state concerned. Where the pharmaceutical inspection convention does not apply, United Kingdom inspectors have made some informal visits in association with the local inspectorate.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many holders of licences granted under the Product Licences (Parallel Imports) Scheme also hold manufacturers' licences which enable them to re-package and re-assemble products the original packs of which are in a foreign language.

Mr. Mellor: Sixteen.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to how many products granted product licences (parallel imports) are *(a)* dispensed in the manufacturer's original packs which contain information for patients in a foreign language and *(b)* have to be re-packaged by the importing wholesaler or dispensing pharmacist to overcome language problems.

Mr. Mellor: Holders of product licences (parallel imports) are required to remove any instructions containing information for patients in a foreign language unless such instructions form part of an approved multilingual leaflet including English.

Licence holders must also arrange for all products to be relabelled to comply with the United Kingdom statutory requirements for labelling of medicinal products.

All information received about alleged breaches of the above requirements will be followed up.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance his Department has given to local authorities concerning the provision of information under section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures his Department is taking to ensure that information on services for disabled people under section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is made available in ethnic minority languages; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what measures his Department is taking to ensure that information on services for disabled people under section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is made available on tape or in braille or on sign videos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Local authority circular LAC(87)6, issued in March 1987, gave general guidance on section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, together with other sections implemented on 1 April 1987. Local authorities are best placed to develop information services to meet the needs of disabled people, including the provision of braille text and leaflets in ethnic minority languages when appropriate. The Department recently issued circular LASSL(88)8 to both local and health authorities which drew attention to the importance of access to information about local and national services. Copies of both circulars have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures his Department is taking to monitor the implementation of section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Department's social services inspectorate is engaged in several exercises to monitor those sections of the Act so far implemented, which include section 4.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he plans to ensure that the report made by him under section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, when implemented, will be used to develop good community care practice.

Mr. Mellor: Section 11 of the Act requires that an annual report be laid before Parliament containing

information about the development of health and social services in the community for people with a mental illness or a mental handicap, and about the numbers of such people who are receiving treatment in hospital. Copies of the report will be made available to those statutorily responsible for providing relevant services, including community care.

AIDS

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list of the publications and media in which AIDS warning advertisements have appeared since the inception of the campaign.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's AIDS public education campaign has comprised advertising in all the main media. The Health Education Authority, which assumed responsibility for the campaign in October 1987, has continued the practice of placing specifically targeted advertising in those parts of the media where it is most likely to achieve its particular purpose. Selected AIDS advertising has appeared in the following media since inception of the campaign:

National Press
The Daily Express
The Independent
Daily Mail
Daily Mirror
Daily Record
Daily Star
Morning Star
Sun
Daily Telegraph
Times
Today
Sunday Express
Mail on Sunday
Sunday Mirror
News of the World
Observer
Sunday People
Sunday Times
Financial Times
Guardian
London Evening Standard
Sunday Post

Magazines
Capital Gay
Escort
Fiesta
Gay Life
Gay Times
Men Only
Penthouse
Square Peg
Out—The National Gay
Company
Cosmopolitan
Elle
Mayfair
Options
Over 21
The Pink
Prima
She
Singles
T.V. Times
What Car

Regional Press
(Wolverhampton) Express and Star
Barking and Dagenham Post
Belfast Irish News
Belfast Telegraph
Belfast News Letter
Birmingham Evening Mail
Birmingham Post
Brighton Evening Argus
Bristol Evening Post
Bristol Western Daily Press
Cardiff Post Series
Coventry Evening Telegraph
Cumberland News
Derby Journal
Darlington Northern Echo
Dundee Evening Telegraph
Dundee Courier and Advertiser
Eastern Evening News
Eastern Daily Post
Edinburgh Evening News
Evening Sentinel
Gainsborough News
Glasgow Evening Times
Glasgow Herald
Grimsby Evening Telegraph
Hull Daily Mail
Ipswich East Anglian Daily Times
Kenilworth Evening News
Kenilworth Weekly News
Lancashire Evening Post
Leeds Yorkshire Post
Leicester Mercury
Leamington Spa Courier
Lincolnshire Echo
Liverpool Echo
Liverpool Daily Post
London Daily News
Manchester Evening News
Market Rasen Mail
Midland Metro Press
North of Scotland Newspapers
North Wales Weekly News
Northants Evening Telegraph
Nottingham Evening Post
Newcastle—The Journal
Newcastle Evening Chronicle
Norwich Eastern Daily Press
Portsmouth The News
Reading Standard
Sheffield Star
South London Press
South Wales Argus
Southern Evening Echo
South Wales Echo
Stratford on Avon Herald
The Scotsman
The South Wales Echo (Cardiff)
The Standard
Sunderland Echo
Western Evening Herald
Western Mail
Wolverhampton Express and Star
Y Cymro
Y Faner

Youth Press
Arena
Blitz
Blue Jeans
Company
Echoes
The Face
Fairly Serious Monthly
I-D
International Musician
Jackie
Just 17
Kerrang
LM Magazine
Look Alive
Look Now
Looks
Making Music
Melody Maker

Mizz
My Guy
New Musical Express
Nineteen
No. 1
Q
Record Mirror
Root
Sky
Smash Hits
Sounds
Street Magazine
Top Magazine
Tracks

Listings Magazines
Time Out
City Life
City Limits
Over 21
The List
Venue
What's on in Birmingham
What's on key to Scotland

Ethnic Press
Advertiser Group
African Times
Birmingham Daily News
Camden New Journal
Caribbean Times
Croydon Post
Derby Journal
Des Pardes
Enfield Advertiser
Garavi Gujarat
Gujerat Samacher
Hackney Gazette
Haringey Advertiser
Huddersfield Weekly News
Islington Gazette
Daily Jang
Janumot
Leader Group
Leeds Weekly News
Lewisham and Catford Mercury Series
New Life
Nottingham Journal
Nottingham Trader
Putney and Wandsworth Guardian
Ravi
Reading Standard
Sheffield Weekly Gazette
Sing Tao
South London Press
Southwark Sparrow
Stardust
Stratford Express
Surma Bengali News
The Voice
Waltham Forest Extra
Weekly Gleaner
Wen Wei Po
West Africa

Student Press
Y Cymro
Leech
Courier
What's Happening
Impact
Y Seren
Gair Rydd

Travellers Press
Going Abroad
Airport
Business Traveller
Director
Economist
Executive Travel
Expression
Hot Air
Management Today

Other Media
Poster sites
Cinema
Radio
Television

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial help has been given to each of the regional health authorities covering the Greater London area to help in the treatment and counselling of people suffering from AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: The amounts of additional central funding allocated to the four Thames regional health authorities towards the costs of AIDS and HIV-related services for the financial years 1986-87 to 1989-90 are given in the table.

	1985-86 £ million	*1986-87 £ million*	*1987-88 £ million*	*1988-89 £ million*	*1989-90 £ million*
North West Thames	0·325	1·096	14·019	31·454	36·245
North East Thames	0·290	1·085	6·163	11·417	16·606
South East Thames	0·145	0·565	3·553	5·844	11·222
South West Thames	Nil	Nil	0·096	1·723	5·406

Social Work Training

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to improve the quality and availability of practice placements on social work training courses.

Mr. Mellor: The improvement of the quality and availability of practice placements on social work training courses is primarily a matter to be resolved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) together with the colleges who provide qualifying courses, local authority social services departments and other service agencies.

We have taken the view that practice placement provision is an issue requiring priority attention. Additional funds provided to the central council this year for improvement to qualifying training included £700,000 for improvements to planning and cooperation between colleges and employers. We shall provide further funding for practice placement improvements over the next 5 years. Our training support programme initiative will encourage local authority social services departments to appoint placements organisers and supervisors. And in the coming financial year we shall be providing funds for a research project in this area.

Yorkshire Health Authorities (Staffing)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the latest available figures for staffing levels in each of the district health authorities within the Yorkshire

region in the following categories *(a)* ancillary, *(b)* nursing, *(c)* medical and dental, *(d)* administrative and clerical and *(e)* other grades, including ambulance staff and technicians; and if he will indicate the percentage increase on or decrease which has occurred in each category within the previous year.

Mr. Mellor: The latest figures available centrally are listed in the tables.

National Health Service staff in post
Yorkshire regional health authority
At 30 September of each year

Whole-time equivalent[1]

District health authorities	*Hospital and community health service medical and dental staff*[2] *1985*	*1986*	*Percentage change 1985-86*
Hull	160	140	−9·2
East Yorkshire	70	70	−2·2
Grimsby	70	70	−4·3
Scunthorpe	70	70	+6·5
Northallerton	20	20	+9·5
York	100	110	+4·7
Scarborough	50	50	+6·2
Harrogate	70	70	−2·4
Bradford	170	180	+2·9
Airedale	50	60	+24·5
Calderdale	80	90	+2·5
Huddersfield	110	110	+4·9
Dewsbury	80	80	+7·5
Leeds Western (T)	390	400	+1·2
Leeds Eastern (T)	330	320	−2·8
Wakefield	110	110	+0·1
Pontefract	60	70	+11·1
RHA HQ and HQ units	—	—	
Total of region	2,930	2,970	+1·6

Notes:

Department of Health (SR7) Annual Census of National Health Service Medical Manpower.

[1] Whole-time equivalents are rounded to the nearest ten (10). Unrounded figures are used for percentage change calculations.

[2] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Excludes senior registrars and consultants in non-teaching District Health Authorities and senior registrars in teaching District Health Authorities. These staff have their contracts with the Regional Health Authority and are included in the regional total.

(T) = Teaching districts.

NHS staff in post
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
at 30 September of each year

Whole-time equivalent[1]

District Health Authorities	*Ancillary staff* *1985*	*1986*	*Percentage change 1985-1986*
Hull	930	800	−13·9
East Yorkshire	710	540	−23·8
Grimsby	450	420	−7·4
Scunthorpe	360	320	−11·1
Northallerton	170	170	−2·5
York	780	660	−15·3
Scarborough	340	320	−5·5
Harrogate	450	430	−4·2
Bradford	990	900	−9·0
Airedale	500	450	−9·9
Calderdale	520	350	−33·2
Huddersfield	730	650	−10·4
Dewsbury	340	290	−13·6
Leeds Western[2]	1,310	1,230	−6·2
Leeds Eastern[2]	1,340	1,280	−4·6
Wakefield	800	680	−15·5
Pontefract	420	240	−43·3
RHA HQ and HQ units	160	140	−13·6
Total of region	11,300	9,870	−12·7

[1] All whole-time equivalents are rounded to the nearest ten (10). Unrounded figures are used for percentage change calculations.

[2] Teaching districts.

Source: Department of Health (SR7) annual census of NHS Non-Medical manpower.

NHS staff in post
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
at 30 September of each year

whole-time equivalent[1]

District Health Authorities	*Nursing and midwifery staff*[2] *1985*	*1986*	*Percentage change 1985-86*
Hull	2,520	2,570	+1·8
East Yorkshire	1,770	1,700	−4·1
Grimsby	1,340	1,390	+3·4
Scunthorpe	1,130	1,130	+0·1
Northallerton	530	530	+5·5
York	2,340	2,360	+1·1
Scarborough	850	870	+2·2
Harrogate	1,150	1,130	−1·7
Bradford	2,810	2,770	−1·1
Airedale	1,430	1,390	−2·9
Calderdale	1,520	1,550	+2·2
Huddersfield	2,060	2,020	−1·9
Dewsbury	1,010	1,030	+1·5
Leeds Western[3]	3,380	3,360	−0·6
Leeds Eastern[3]	3,080	3,160	+2·4
Wakefield	2,120	2,130	+0·3
Pontefract	1,080	1,100	+1·7
RHA HQ and HQ Units	100	110	+8·8
Total of Region	30,220	30,290	+0·2

[1] All whole-time equivalents are rounded to the nearest ten (10). Unrounded figures are used for percentage change calculations.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Teaching districts.

Source: Department of Health (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

NHS staff in post
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
at 30 September of each year

Whole-time equivalent[1]

District Health Authorities	*Administrative and clerical staff* *1985*	*1986*	*Percentage change 1985-86*
Hull	620	600	−2·5
East Yorkshire	320	310	−1·6
Grimsby	280	290	+0·7
Scunthorpe	270	280	+0·7
Northallerton	130	130	−3·8
York	460	470	+1·2
Scarborough	190	200	+5·7
Harrogate	250	260	+5·5
Bradford	580	580	+1·1
Airedale	270	270	+1·7
Calderdale	290	290	+1·0
Huddersfield	400	410	+2·4
Dewsbury	230	250	+7·4
Leeds Western[2]	790	760	−3·9
Leeds Eastern[2]	770	770	+0·4
Wakefield	370	390	+3·1
Pontefract	250	260	+3·8

District Health Authorities	Administrative and clerical staff 1985	1986	Percentage change 1985-86
RHA HQ and HQ Units	540	510	−6·5
Total of region	7,020	7,020	+0·1

[1] All whole-time equivalents are rounded to the nearest ten (10). Unrounded figures are used for percentage change calculations.
[2]Teaching districts.
Source: Department of Health (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

NHS staff in post
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
at 30 September of each year
Whole-time equivalent[1]

District Health Authorities	Other non-medical staff (excluding ancillary, nursing and administrative and clerical) 1985	1986	Percentage change 1985-86
Hull	990	1,070	+8·0
East Yorkshire	340	340	+0·3
Grimsby	280	300	+5·8
Scunthorpe	220	230	+5·3
Northallerton	120	120	−2·1
York	740	770	+4·4
Scarborough	210	220	+1·5
Harrogate	280	300	+6·3
Bradford	620	650	+5·1
Airedale	330	320	−0·8
Calderdale	310	330	+5·2
Huddersfield	460	460	−0·7
Dewsbury	240	250	+6·2
Leeds Western[2]	1,130	1,190	+5·4
Leeds Eastern[2]	890	900	+1·5
Wakefield	440	470	+4·9
Pontefract	260	270	+5·8
RHA HQ and HQ Units	1,310	1,220	−6·9
Total of region	9,170	9,410	+2·6

[1] Whole-time equivalents are rounded to the nearest ten (10). Unrounded figures are used for percentage change calculations.
[2]Teaching districts.
Source: Department of Health (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Radiation Overdoses (Compensation)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what formula is being used by the assessors deciding on levels of compensation for patients in the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital who received overdoses of radiation; what considerations will be taken into account; and whether the payments are a de facto acceptance of negligence.

Mr. Freeman: It is for Exeter health authority to decide the levels of compensation in the light of its own independent advice on the clinical effects of the overdose of radiation on individual patients.

The health authority has accepted that the treatment of patients on the miscalibrated machine amounted to a breach of its duty of care towards those patients.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the implications for health care services within the district of the obligation to make compensation payments to those damaged by excessive radiation at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital funded from within their own resources.

Mr. Freeman: All health authorities are expected to budget for contingencies. It is too soon to judge the likely provision to meet the costs of compensation arising from the radiation incident at Exeter. No adverse effect on health care services is expected.

Salmonella

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of salmonella enteritidis have been reported on a monthly basis for the last two years; and how many of those cases were phage 4.

Mr. Freeman: Monthly statistics are not available. Provisional figures by quarter are as follows:

Salmonella reports (cases and excreters) reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre by quarter

	Total salmonella enteritidis	Total phage type 4
1986		
Q1	337	108
Q2	707	357
Q3	1,684	1,009
Q4	1,292	797
1987		
Q1	607	324
Q2	1,108	771
Q3	2,365	1,557
Q4	1,946	1,209
1988		
Q1	842	598
Q2	2,241	1,429
Q3	5,271	3,555
Q4	4,889	3,480

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the cases of salmonella food poisoning connected with eggs which were referred to in his Department's recent press advertisements, giving the number of people affected and the most likely source of the eggs in question in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The number of reported cases of salmonella food poisoning connected with eggs in the first 10 months of 1988 is as follows:

	Number of people affected
January	27
February	—
March	—
April	60
May	302
June	159
July	207
August	145
September	114
October	127

Information is not available on the most likely source of the eggs in question in each case.

St. Bartholomew's Eye Hospital

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether St. Bartholomew's eye hospital is able to operate on children with eye cancer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: St. Bartholomew's eye hospital is able to operate on children with eye cancer. Last year there were 325 surgical admissions and 267 day cases. There were 64 new out-patient referrals and 378 follow-up attendances.

Water Pollution

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest information as to whether the public's health was in any danger in July in Cornwall due to polluted water supplies.

Mr. Freeman: Anyone drinking the polluted water immediately after the incident last July may have experienced a range of unpleasant symptoms, but these should have abated rapidly and completely. There is no reason to expect any long-term adverse effect to health. However, in view of some continuing anxiety within the local population, we will be asking independent experts to look at the evidence, and publish the resulting conclusions and advice.

Pay Beds

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his policy on use of National Health Service pay beds in the light of the report, a copy of which has been sent to him, entitled "Laing's Review of Private Health Care."

Mr. Mellor: Policy remains unchanged on NHS pay beds authorisation, which is made only when a demand is demonstrated, and after wide local consultation. Pay beds are not reserved for the exclusive use of private patients.

Until the introduction of the Health and Medicines Act, charges for private patients were set at a level sufficient to recover the full cost of treatment. The Act allows charges to be set at commercial rates to increase income available to health authorities for further improving the health service.

Drug Prices

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on *(a)* the over-the-counter price in Spain of 5ml of the drug Otosporin, *(b)* the price charged to the National Health Service and *(c)* the price charged by pharmacists when the drug is obtained by private prescription.

Mr. Mellor: The price reimbursed by the NHS when a community pharmacist or dispensing doctor supplies Otosporin is £4·09 for a 5ml bottle, before any account is taken of discounts obtained by dispensers. Hospitals may buy at prices negotiated separately with the manufacturer. When the medicine is obtained by private prescription, the price is not controlled by the Department; it is set by the pharmacy.

We have no information on prices paid in Spain.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to require all drug companies supplying drugs listed in the British National Formulary to inform his Department of the prices that they charge for those drugs in other European Community countries.

Mr. Mellor: The European Commission has announced that it intends to compile a data bank containing the prices of medicines in each member state, and we shall study this with interest.

Electoral Statistics

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many electors per right hon. or hon. Member there were in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland in each of the last 30 years; how many right hon. and hon. Members were returned by each country in the same period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Year	*(a) England*		*(b) Scotland*		*(c) Wales*		*(d) Northern Ireland*	
	MP's	*Average electors per MP*	*MP's*	*Average electors per MP*	*MP's*	*Average electors per MP*	*MP's*	*Average electors per MP*
1959	511	57,345	71	48,081	36	50,158	12	72,895
1960	511	57,565	71	48,093	36	50,105	12	73,350
1961	511	57,670	71	47,922	36	50,049	12	73,346
1962	511	57,905	71	47,946	36	50,125	12	73,641
1963	511	58,092	71	47,857	36	50,095	12	74,041
1964	511	58,326	71	47,794	36	50,153	12	74,254
1965	511	58,759	71	47,745	36	50,367	12	74,952
1966	511	59,072	71	47,686	36	50,460	12	75,553
1967	511	59,278	71	47,523	36	50,489	12	75,820
1968	511	59,825	71	47,717	36	50,769	12	76,406
1969	511	60,311	71	47,865	36	51,176	12	77,212
1970[1]	511	64,502	71	51,537	36	54,767	12	85,435
1971	511	64,943	71	51,905	36	55,280	12	86,150
1972	511	65,199	71	51,986	36	55,483	12	86,134
1973	511	65,387	71	51,946	36	55,715	12	86,003
1974	516	64,908	71	52,178	36	56,021	12	86,824
1975	516	65,418	71	52,581	36	56,471	12	86,760
1976	516	65,753	71	53,017	36	56,846	12	86,103
1977	516	66,056	71	53,336	36	57,088	12	86,076
1978	516	66,434	71	53,649	36	57,362	12	86,142
1979	516	67,076	71	54,043	36	57,883	12	86,709

Year	(a) England		(b) Scotland		(c) Wales		(d) Northern Ireland	
	MP's	Average electors per MP	MP's	Average electors per MP	MP's	Average electors per MP	MP's	Average electors per MP
1980	516	67,504	71	54,374	36	58,293	12	87,456
1981	516	67,961	71	54,725	36	58,753	12	87,778
1982	516	68,534	71	55,118	36	59,109	12	88,105
1983	523	68,011	72	54,642	38	56,273	17	62,423
1984	523	68,452	72	54,962	38	56,539	17	63,389
1985	523	68,714	72	55,110	38	56,384	17	63,683
1986	523	69,137	72	55,370	38	56,825	17	63,965
1987	523	69,585	72	55,485	38	57,241	17	64,889
1988	523	69,689	72	[illegible]	38	57,576	17	65,236

[1] Reduction in voting age from 21 to 18.

Sources:
British Electoral Facts 1932-1980, FWS Craig
Electoral Statistics 1974-88, OPCS (Series EL Nos. 1-15).

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of abortions by method for the North East Thames regional health authority for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the provisional number of notifications received in respect of abortions performed on women usually resident in North East Thames regional health authority by method for the June quarter of 1988 (the latest period for which data are available), and the final figures for 1987, which were published on 15 December 1988.

Notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to usual residents of North East Thames regional health authority (RHA) by procedure
1987 and June quarter 1988

Procedure	Area of usual residence North East Thames RHA	
	1987	June quarter 1988[1]
All	18,903	5,116
Hysterotomy (only)	8	1
Hysterectomy (only)	—	—
Vacuum aspiration (only)	11,756	3,005
Vacuum aspiration with D & C or D & E	6,252	1,852
D & C or D & E (including menstrual aspiration)	453	109
Other surgical	5	1
Prostaglandins (only)	203	65
Prostaglandins with other agents	138	34
Other medical	17	27
Other and combined methods	71	22

[1] provisional (includes notifications received up to the end of October 1988).

Cancer Screening

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why the report into cervical cancer screening at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, was issued with pages 3 to 22 omitted; if he will cause those pages now to be published; whether he will now authorise an independent public inquiry into the original incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The report to which the hon. Member refers was commissioned by and is the property of the Liverpool health authority. In order to obtain the full co-operation of those involved, the authority gave an undertaking that their evidence would remain confidential. The unfortunate incidents in Liverpool have already been investigated extensively by an internal review, the facts established and action taken locally to ensure that there is no repetition of the occurrence. In the circumstances we are not convinced that a further inquiry is warranted.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he proposes to conduct a survey of health authorities regarding provision of vaccination for hepatitis B and the estimated costs involved.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to do so. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health indicated previously to the hon. Member on 12 December 1988 at column *450* we have asked health authorities to use their occupational health services to decide on priorities for this vaccination in the light of the advice issued to them last summer. Our understanding is that many authorities have taken the necessary steps, and others are following suit.

Alexander Fleming House

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health at what cost work on the re-cladding of Alexander Fleming house has been carried out; and what architectural advice was obtained before the decision to re-clad was taken.

Mr. Freeman: The re-cladding of Alexander Fleming house, which is a rented building, forms part of a proposed major refurbishment planned by the landlord. Costs and architectural advice are matters for him and final decisions have yet to be taken about the plan.

Handbook of Environmental Health

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the outside consultant involved in the preparation of the "Handbook of Environmental Health"; what is the extent of the consultation exercise being carried out; if he will identify local authority organisations and professional associations invited to provide comments; and what is the likely publication date of the handbook.

Mr. Freeman: A handbook of practical guidance about environmental health in war has been prepared in draft form by a retired senior army medical officer from an earlier document written by a former medical officer of environmental health.

The consultation exercise now being carried out involves a number of Government Departments with related responsibilities. Thereafter, local authority associations and medical and professional organisations with emergency planning interest will be consulted.

The publication date of the document will depend upon completion of the consultation process.

Water Supply

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the regional and district health authorities at whose request additional chemicals are currently being added to the public water supply.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not hold such information centrally.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of his Department's budget is set aside to meet the liabilities of health authorities in respect of effects of chemicals added to the public water supply at their request.

Mr. Freeman: None. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has, however, indemnified water authorities carrying out fluoridation at the request of health authorities against the unlikely event of damages being awarded in respect of adverse effects on a person's health caused by fluoridation.

Vaccination

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if MMR is available for individual clinicians in *(a)* the Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority area and *(b)* in the Camberwell district health authority area if they decide to vaccinate a child who is not 15 months old or four to five years old.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. The ages quoted by the hon. Member are those which we have recommended should receive MMR vaccine in the advice that we have issued to health authorities and individual doctors. I understand that Camberwell and Lewisham and North Southwark are among those also making the vaccine available for other children on request from the doctor concerned.

Railway Signalling

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requests or instructions he has made to London Regional Transport or London Underground Limited which has resulted in changes in the methods of maintenance, or replacement, of signalling equipment on their railways; what changes in practice have already taken place; and what further changes are now planned.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made no requests nor given instructions to London Regional Transport or London Underground Limited about signalling equipment. Any change in practice involving either maintenance or replacement of such equipment is a matter for London Regional Transport, bearing in mind that undertaking's statutory duty to provide services with due regard to efficiency, economy and safety of operation.

Emissions

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to introduce legislation setting emission standards for vehicle exhausts at least as stringent as those prevailing in the United States for nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbon and particulates.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall be implementing the revised standards for all these pollutants recently agreed in the European Community. For large vehicles over 2,000 cc, the new limits are equivalent to United States standards. For cars under 2,000 cc, the standards are slightly less stringent. They will require the fitting of at least an oxidation catalyst to most cars. We believe that the Community, in adopting these standards, has struck the right balance between environmental, consumer and industrial concerns.

Fuel Economy

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department has been taking and intends to take to improve the fuel economy of cars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Between 1978 and 1987 (the latest figures available) fuel economy improved by over 20 per cent. We expect this trend to continue.

To help buyers the Department publishes six monthly the booklet "New Car Fuel Consumption—The Official Figures" listing the fuel economy of the majority of new cars as determined by the official test. The booklet also provides advice on how to drive for fuel economy. The official fuel consumption figures have to be displayed on all new cars offered for sale and quoted in advertisements which refer to fuel economy.

Inland Waterways (Freight Grants)

Mr Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the total number of applicants for grants and the number of grants made under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981 in respect of facilities for freight transport on inland waterways and the date, purpose and amount of the last grant made; and if he will make a statement concerning any changes made in the terms and conditions applicable to such grants since their introduction.

Mr. Portillo: There have been five grants awarded towards facilities for freight transport on inland waterways under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981. As not all inquiries lead to a formal application for grant it is not possible to state the total number of applicants since the scheme began, but only one formal application has been refused. The last grant was made in October 1986 for petroleum traffic and totalled £65,000. There have been no changes to the terms and conditions attached to these grants, but a review about three years ago on value for money grounds led to some budget adjustment.

Municipal Bus Companies

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the first municipal bus company to be sold.

Mr. Portillo: Two English local authority owned bus companies have already been sold: Portsmouth City

Transport and Yorkshire Rider. In Wales, Taff-Ely Transport has been sold, and the Secretary of State for Scotland has recently approved the sale of Grampian Regional Transport.

Arrests

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available annual figures for *(a)* total arrests, *(b)* total passenger journeys and *(c)* arrests as a percentage of passenger journeys on the London Underground.

Mr. Portillo: The number of arrests for crimes on the London Underground in 1988 was 2,618. The number of recorded crimes during that period was 16,436 and the number of passenger journeys is estimated to have been 814 million. This gives a ratio of one crime for every 49,500 passenger journeys.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available annual figures for *(a)* total arrests, *(b)* total passenger journeys and *(c)* arrests as a percentage of passenger journeys on British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: The British Transport Police report that there were 6,354 arrests in the 1987 calendar year in relation to offences on British Rail. The total number of passenger journeys on BR in 1987-88 was 727·2 million. There was one arrest every 114,448 passenger journeys. As a percentage, this is 0·000874 per cent.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the fixed asset investment in the United Kingdom of the British Railways Board for each year since 1978-79; and what is the planned investment for each year to 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: The figures for the British Railways Board's fixed asset investment in the United Kingdom for the years 1982-83 to 1986-87, the estimated outturn for the 1987-88 and forecasts for 1988-89 to 1990-91 were published in the 1988 public expenditure White Paper (CM 288-11). Earlier years' figures are taken from previous public expenditure White Papers. All are cash.

	£ million
1979-80	388
1980-81	334
1981-82	305
1982-83	273
1983-84	270
1984-85	343
1985-86	402
1986-87	428
1987-88	540
1988-89	641
1989-90	655
1990-91	678

Updated figures including forecasts to 1991-92, which are significantly higher than those contained in the 1988 public expenditure White Paper, will be published shortly in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper.

European Community Funds

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy with respect to seeking the establishment of a medium-term transport infrastructure fund by the European Economic Community and as to the nature of projects to be covered by such a fund.

Mr. Portillo: The Government do not support the European Community Commission's proposal to create a medium-term transport infrastructure fund. The Community has a role in identifying worthwhile schemes of Community significance, and sound means of funding these already exist.

A1 Felton Bypass

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the purpose of the works now being carried out on the A1 Felton bypass Coquet viaduct.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The works are connected with the installation of a new gas main from Morpeth to Alnwick. Statutory undertakers have the right to install apparatus within the highway boundary. The Coquet viaduct offered the only suitable crossing.

M63 (Widening)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects completion of the M63 road widening programme in the Barton bridge area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In about 12 months. The widening across Barton high level bridge finished in December. Work continues on the final contract south of the bridge.

Assessment Studies

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all property in areas covered by the London assessment studies owned by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not the Department's practice to publish the addresses of individual properties that it owns. The Department owns some 1,300 properties in London. All have been acquired in connection with schemes in the national road programme. It is not possible to identify those in the assessment study areas without disproportionate cost.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many oral parliamentary questions he has answered by written reply because the question was not reached at Question Time, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Of the 640 questions tabled for oral reply by the Department in the calendar year 1988, 499 received written replies.

British Transport Police

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details by London British Rail and underground stations of reported incidents to British Transport Police in the last 12 months.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not held centrally in the form requested.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what records are kept of the number of occasions when Metropolitan police are summoned to the assistance of British Transport Police.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not recorded.

London Underground (Fires)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in the last 12 months the London Fire Brigade has been called to attend upon reported fires within the London underground system; and what increase or decrease this represents on the previous 12 month period.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground Ltd. does not have figures in precisely the form requested for the relevant period. However, I understand that the numbers of incidents of fire and smoke recorded by London Underground were 844 in 1987 and 1,248 in 1988, following the Kings Cross fire and with the agreement of the London Fire Brigade, London Underground Ltd. issued revised instructions to staff on calling the fire brigade; these required the brigade to be summoned immediately to all reported or suspected outbreaks of fire or smoke, no matter how small, on any part of the Underground system.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many oil pollution incidents in British territorial waters have been recorded by his Department in each of the past five years; what were the ecological consequences of each incident; what was the total cost in each case for the rescue of endangered sea birds and general clear-up; and how many incidents were traced to the polluter;

(2) what resources are available to his Department to monitor and prosecute owners and masters of vessels dumping oil in British territorial waters;

(3) how many prosecutions have followed cases of oil pollution caused by vessels in British territorial waters in each of the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of oil pollution incidents in British territorial waters in the period 1985-88 reported to the Department's marine pollution control unit (MPCU) are as follows:

	Number
1985	30
1986	24
1987	33
1988	43

These relate to shipping casualty, ship operational and shore installation spillages or threatened spillages. The figures for 1987 and 1988 reflect the extension of territorial sea limits from three to 12 miles. The 1984 figure is not readily available.

Assessing the ecological consequences of an oil spill is not a matter for my Department. However, the Nature Conservancy Council advises me that usually it is not possible to make an overall assessment of all the various factors involved. This is not only because all incidents are different and affect wildlife to a different extent, but also because of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary information about species and habitats affected, particularly when the incident occurs offshore.

The rescue of seabirds affected by oil is undertaken by voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA and SSPCA. Details of their costs are not held centrally. Over the four-year period, the MPCU has incurred costs of around £90,000 in responding to pollution or threat of pollution to United Kingdom coastal, fishery, or sea bird interests arising from spillages of oil in British territorial waters. Details of costs incurred by local authorities on beach clean-up are not held centrally.

The likely source of pollution was identified on 65 occasions, but only 16 of these related to possible illegal ship operational discharges.

All masters of ships and pilots of military and civil aircraft, including those engaged by the MAFF and DAFS on fishery protection, are required to report sightings of oil in British territorial waters. The MPCU's contracted remote sensing aircraft carries out surveillance patrols of the shipping lanes around United Kingdom coasts in addition to responding to major spillages of oil reported by other agencies. The United Kingdom is also a member of the fourteen European nation memorandum of understanding on port state control whereby participating states undertake to inspect vessels arriving in their ports reported as suspected of having made an illegal discharge in the course of their voyage. In addition vessels entering their ports are regularly inspected to check inter alia, oil record books for any evidence of illegal oil discharges. In United Kingdom these are carried out by the Department's marine surveyors.

The numbers of prosecutions for illegal oil discharges from ships in British territorial waters in each of the last five years are:

	Number
1983	19
1984	13
1985	10
1986	7
1987	10
1988	n.a.

n.a. Not yet available.

Stratford Station (Congestion)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report on the congestion at Stratford, London E15, station during peak travelling times caused by the single turnstile passenger exit; and what arrangements exist for the evacuation of the station in event of an emergency.

Mr. Portillo: As these are matters for the managements of British Rail and London Underground, I will not call for a report. But I understand that in an emergency, both turnstiles could be set to the "out" direction and a gate opened to allow passengers to leave quickly.

Aircraft Sabotage Warnings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what time and on what date in December 1988 he was first aware of the warning issued by the Federal Aviation Administration in respect of a possible sabotage threat to a Pan Am flight from Europe to the United States;

(2) at what level in his Department decisions are taken regarding the passing on to airport and airline operators of warnings of possible sabotage threats received from overseas;

(3) at what time and what date in December 1988 his Department passed to the BAA notices of possible sabotage threats issued by the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States;

(4) what restrictions in respect of circulation were placed upon warnings received by his Department in December 1988 from the Federal Aviation Administration regarding a possible sabotage threat to a Pan Am flight from Europe to the United States.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the statement given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

"Crime on the London Underground"

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 20 December, *Official Report*, column 158 how much of the £15 million made available by the Government to London Underground Limited has been expended on safety measures recommended in his report "Crime on the London Underground".

Mr. Portillo: To date, London Underground Limited has spent £3 million of the Government grant of £15 million on measures to improve passenger security and prevent vandalism and graffiti. The remaining funds are budgeted to be spent by the end of 1989-90 on further measures which will reflect experience with the pilot schemes currently under way.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the Police Committee on progress made in the implementation of recommendations in the 1986 Report, "Crime on the London Underground", regarding the organisation of the British Transport Police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: An increase in the complement of the London Underground division of the British Transport Police from 350 to 400 officers, and the extension of local area policing as piloted successfully in the Stockwell area, have been agreed. I understand further that the British Transport Police committee is keeping the organisation of the force under review in the light of the 1986 crime report, the recent inspection of the London Underground division by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and the report of the investigation into the King's Cross fire.

Property Purchase

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why his Department allowed the London borough of Greenwich to take possession of 3 Camrose street SE2, before the purchase of the property had been completed and the agreed price had been paid.

Mr. Channon *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The current occupation of 3 Camrose street is a matter for the vendor as its purchase by the Department on the basis of vacant possession has not yet been completed.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department agreed terms for the purchase of 3 Camrose street SE2, following the service of a planning notice under section 193 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971; why his Department has refused to meet the vendor's legal and professional costs; and when the agreed price was paid.

Mr. Channon *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Negotiations between the vendor and the district valuer were concluded in August. The district valuer subsequently advised that the vendor's professional fees should be included in the agreed price which is payable on completion, which is expected to take place next month.

Motorcycle Casualties

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorcycle casualties were involved in road traffic accidents for the latest available year; what proportion of these were provisional licence holders; what proportion resulted from accidents involving cars and what were the primary causes of accidents; and what proportion of these resulted from a single vehicle accident and what were the primary causes of accident.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest year for which figures are available is 1987. There were 45,801 motorcycle user casualties in road accidents in Great Britain—42,288 riders and 3,513 passengers. Of these, 723 were killed and 13,173 were seriously injured.

It is not known what proportion of these motorcycle riders were provisional licence holders; in 3 per cent. of accidents involving motorcycles the motorcycle was displaying an L plate.

Of the motorcycle user casualties, 21 per cent. occurred in single vehicle accidents, and 61 per cent in accidents involving a motorcycle and a car.

The causes of accidents are not recorded on the STATS 19 reporting forms. Of the accidents involving a car and a motorcycle, we know that the car was turning right in about 40 per cent. of cases.

Drivers (Fitness)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of drivers aged *(a)* 17 to 60 years, *(b)* 60 to 69 years, *(c)* 70 to 79 years, *(d)* 80 years and over referred to the driver and vehicle licensing centre in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and in each case, what percentage of referrals led to a disqualification from driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures available are as follows:

	Driver notifications[1]	*Application containing a medical declaration*	*Other notifications*
1982	13,709	107,930	12,696
1983	17,929	118,872	13,814
1984	22,755	116,502	12,393
1985	27,810	111,618	14,004
1986	36,040	144,126	15,489
1987	48,086	144,734	10,864
1988[2]	53,884	140,496	14,126

[1] During currency of licence.
[2] To end of November.

Many take heed of the advice on the driving licence about the legal obligation to notify disabilities and rightly

refer themselves. Of these, many retain the right to drive. I will write to my hon. Friend to give fuller details about the statutory powers available to the Secretary of State in this area of driver licensing and how the driver and vehicle licensing centre carries out its medical investigations of drivers.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of drivers referred to the driver and vehicle licensing centre *(a)* by the driver themselves and *(b)* on behalf of another driver, with a condition believed to affect fitness as a driver in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and in each case what percentage of referrals led to a disqualification from driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Orange Badges

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his best estimate of the number of parking spaces available in each local authority area to holders of an orange badge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The provision of parking spaces reserved for orange badge holders is the responsibility of individual local authorities. Information on the number provided by each authority is not held centrally.

British Rail (Chairman)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to replace the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: No, Sir.

M4 (Barrier Replacement)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current progress on the programme of barrier replacement on the M4; and what information he has on the standard and quality of the original installation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Pursuant to the reply to my hon. Friend on 6 December, *(Official Report,* column *97),* 79·3 km of safety fencing on the central reserve of the M4 in England have already been replaced. A further 5·2 km is scheduled for replacement this financial year, and 3·8 km next financial year. Up to 61·3 km will be dealt with in subsequent years.

Despite the fact that the Department engaged a consulting engineer to supervise their installation, we know that some original concrete post footings were not constructed to the shape specified by the Department.

TRRL research report 75, published in 1986, showed that the safety fencing involved is nonetheless still performing better than its design requirements.

Replacement of safety fencing can with greatest safety and with convenience be done when other major maintenance is being carried out. There is no case for faster replacement given that the safety fencing continues to perform as intended.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of personal equity plans taken out in 1988 and in 1987.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many personal equity plans have been in existence in each year since the instigation of the scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1987 over 250,000 plans were taken out and in 1988 it is estimated that a further 100,000 plans were started.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost to the Exchequer to date of personal equity plans; and what is the anticipated cost in each of the next three years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information is as follows:

	Estimated cost of income tax relief £ million
1986-87	negligible
1987-88	5
1988-89	15

Costs in future years are expected to increase.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many organisations have offered personal equity plans; how many have ceased to do so; and if he will list them by name.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since the scheme was introduced in 1987, 129 organisations have offered personal equity plans. Details are not held on the number and names of organisations which have ceased to offer plans.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many personal equity plan holders have a marginal tax rate of *(a)* 25 per cent. and *(b)* 40 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that the information is not available.

Interest (Taxation)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax is paid annually by zero rate tax payers on bank and building society interest.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1987-88, about £450 million of the composite rate tax accounted for by building societies, banks and other deposit-takers was due in respect of interest that would not have been liable to tax in the hands of its recipients in the absence of a composite rate system.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the sums invested so far in BES in *(a)* manufacturing, *(b)* services and *(c)* property for 1988-89 so far.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is not yet available centrally from official sources.

Airports (Intimate Searches)

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many full and intimate searches of women passengers have been undertaken by the customs authorities at Gatwick airport in the last relevant 12 months, and how many proved negative;

(2) how many full and intimate searches of women passengers have been undertaken by the customs authorities at Heathrow airport in the last relevant 12 months, and how many proved negative.

Mr. Lilley: Customs set up central records on search of person in July 1987 but these records do not identify separately searches of men and women.

For the period 1 July 1987 to 31 March 1988, the numbers of persons intimately searched were 206 at Gatwick and 166 at Heathrow. Drugs were recovered in 29 instances at Gatwick and 19 at Heathrow. These figures include four cases where drugs were found before the search was undertaken and 30 where drugs were found afterwards (for example, concealed internally by smugglers but recovered only after the search).

Senior Personal Secretaries (Civil Service)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average hourly rate of pay to senior personal secretaries in the Civil Service *(a)* within the London weighting area and *(b)* outside that area.

Mr. Brooke: Senior personal secretaries in the Civil Service are not paid on an hourly basis. Their pay with effect from 1 April 1988 is as follows:

London (a) £	*Outside London (b)* £
10,924	9,174
11,341	9,591
11,758	10,008
12,331	10,581

The London salary includes inner London weighting of £1,750; the rates for the intermediate and outer London zones are £1,000 and £725 respectively. All senior personal secretaries are eligible for a lower rate skill supplement of £404 per annum. A local pay addition of up to £700 per annum is payable at the discretion of Departments to meet particular recruitment and retention needs.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in the 1989-90 financial year of introducing a reduced rate tax band of *(a)* 20 per cent. and *(b)* 15 per cent. on the first £1,500 of taxable income; and what would be the effect on the net income of (i) a single person, (ii) a couple where the wife is not working and (iii) a couple where the wife is working and paying tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1989-90 the full year income tax cost of a reduced rate of 20 per cent. on the first £1,500 of taxable income would be about £1·7 billion. A reduced rate of 15 per cent. for the same band of taxable income would cost about £3·4 billion in a full year.

Estimates are based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. The costings assume that 1988-89 tax allowances are indexed to 1989-90 by 6·25 per cent. in accordance with the assumption in the Autumn Statement.

The effects on the net incomes of different types of family are given in the table. It is assumed in each case that earnings are sufficient to use the whole of the £1,500 reduced rate band.

Increase in net income from introduction of reduced rate tax bands in 1989-90

£ per week

Family type	*(a) Reduced rate of 20 per cent. on first £1,500 of taxable income*	*(b) Reduced rate of 15 per cent. on first £1,500 of taxable income*
(i) Single person	1·44	2·88
(ii) Married couple with wife not working	1·44	2·88
(iii) Married couple with wife working and paying tax	2·88	5·77

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much in real terms the average annual tax payment of a man with no allowances and reliefs other than the married man's tax allowance earning *(a)* £5,000, *(b)* £10,000, *(c)* £15,000 and *(d)* £20,000 has increased or decreased since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The table compares the income tax liability of a married man under the current tax regime and under the 1978-79 regime indexed to 1988-89 levels according to the statutory formula.

Annual income tax liability of married man with no reliefs or allowances other than the married man's allowance

Income £	*1978-79 Indexed tax regime* £	*1988-89 tax regime* £	*Reduction compared with 1978-79 indexed regime* £	*Per cent.*
5,000	420·75	226·25	194·50	46·2
10,000	2,070·75	1,476·25	594·50	28·7
15,000	3,720·75	2,726·25	994·50	26·7
20,000	5,370·75	3,976·25	1,394·50	26·0

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide figures for 1979 and 1986 showing, on an equivalent income basis, the proportion of each of the following household types in each quintile of *(a)* original and *(b)* post-tax income as defined in the annual articles in *Economic Trends* on the effects of taxes and benefits for (i) one adult with children, (ii) two adults with children, (iii) non-retired without children and (iv) retired.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that these figures could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, some of the information requested is available for 1985 on page 113 of the July 1987 edition of *Economic Trends*.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table which sets out for a two-child family on *(a)* half average earnings, *(b)* three quarters average earnings, *(c)* average earnings, *(d)* one and a half average earnings, *(e)* twice average earnings, *(f)* five times average earnings and *(g)* 10 times

average earnings the increase in net income to be derived from (i) a 1p cut in the standard rate of income tax in the 1989-90 financial year. (ii) an increase in personal allowances, over and above indexation, which incurred the same cost as a 1p cut in standard rate income tax, (iii) an increase in child benefit which incurred the same cost as a 1p in standard rate income tax (both assuming and not assuming similar increases in the income support and family credit children's rates separately) and (iv) the introduction of a reduced rate tax band of 20 per cent. at the same cost as a 1p cut in standard rate income tax, showing what band of income the reduced rate would cover, and (v) the introduction or a reduced rate tax band of 15 per cent. at the same cost as a 1p cut in standard rate income tax, showing what band of income the reduced rate would cover.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* The effects of the proposed changes on a family with two children are shown in the table. The table contains information based on direct revenue or expenditure cost in a full year at 1989-90 levels of income. Estimates are based on projections of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes in line with forecasts in the Autumn Statement. On this basis, each of the measures would cost £1·53 billion in a full year that is the full year figure underlying the first year cost of a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax, £1·40 billion, shown in the Autumn Statement. The income tax changes are compared with the 1988-89 tax regime indexed to 1989-90 according to the statutory provisions. The income tax calculations assume that all personal allowances would increase by the same percentage and disregard any changes in social security income related benefits to which the family may be entitled. It has also been assumed that the only tax relief or allowance available to the married couple is the married man's allowance and that the wife has no earnings.

Increase in income after tax (£ per week) compared with indexation in 1989-90 for married man with two children

	Multiple of average earnings[1]						
	½	*¾*	*1*	*1½*	*2*	*5*	*10*
Increase derived from							
(i) 1p cut in basic rate	0·53	1·23	1·90	3·25	3·96	3·96	3·96
(ii) 6·75 per cent. increase in personal allowances	1·35	1·35	1·35	1·35	2·16	2·16	2·16
(iii) Increase in child benefit							
(a) £3·00 per week per child[2]	6·00	6·00	6·00	6·00	6·00	6·00	6·00
(b) £2·30 per week per child[3]	4·60	4·60	4·60	4·60	4·60	4·60	4·60
(iv) reduced rate band of 20 per cent. on first £1,350 of taxable income	1·30	1·30	1·30	1·30	1·30	1·30	1·30
(v) reduced rate band of 15 per cent. on first £650 of taxable income	1·25	1·25	1·25	1·25	1·25	1·25	1·25

[1] Average earnings assumed to be £273·1 per week, an increase of 7·5 per cent. on 1988-89 in line with the assumptions used by the Government Actuary for reviewing national insurance contributions (paragraph 3.02 of the Autumn Statement 1988).
[2] Assuming no change in income support and family credit children's rates.
[3] Assuming corresponding changes in income support and family credit children's rates.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, on the same basis as the ready reckoner published in the Autumn Statement, what the effect is on a one-earner, two-child family of spending in 1989-90 the same sum on *(a)* a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax, *(b)* raising income tax thresholds above their indexed levels and *(c)* raising child benefit, assuming (i) no change in income support rates and (ii) corresponding changes in income support rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) today.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* up-to-date figures treating child benefit as negative income tax and using 1988-89 prices but otherwise on the same basis as those provided to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in the *Official Report*, 27 March 1987, columns *310-38*.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* The information is given in the following tables:

50 per cent. of average male earnings (£127·05 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			*Married no children*			*Married both working*			*Married two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*
1978-79												
Income tax	7·91	16·81	17·0	4·42	9·39	9·5	0·00	0·00	0·0	−1·88	−3·99	−4·1
NIC	3·02	6·42	6·5	3·02	6·42	6·5	3·02	6·42	6·5	3·02	6·42	6·5
Total	10·93	23·22	23·6	7·44	15·81	16·0	3·02	6·42	6·5	1·14	2·42	2·5
1979-80												
Income tax	8·95	16·42	16·4	5·20	9·54	9·5	0·00	0·00	0·0	−2·80	−5·14	−5·1
NIC	3·55	6·51	6·5	3·55	6·51	6·5	3·55	6·51	6·5	3·55	6·51	6·5
Total	12·50	22·93	22·9	8·75	16·05	16·0	3·55	6·51	6·5	0·75	1·38	1·4
1980-81												
Income tax	11·78	18·58	17·9	7·33	11·56	11·2	0·00	0·00	0·0	−1·21	−1·91	−1·8
NIC	4·43	6·99	6·7	4·43	6·99	6·7	4·43	6·99	6·7	4·43	6·99	6·7
Total	16·21	25·57	24·7	11·76	18·55	17·9	4·43	6·99	6·7	3·22	5·08	4·9
1981-82												
Income tax	13·95	19·74	19·1	9·51	13·45	13·0	1·58	2·24	2·2	−0·35	−0·50	−0·5

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
NIC	5·65	7·99	7·7	5·65	7·99	7·7	5·65	7·99	7·7	5·65	7·99	7·7
Total	19·60	27·73	26·9	15·16	21·45	20·8	7·23	10·23	9·9	5·30	7·50	7·3
1982-83												
Income tax	14·58	19·26	18·5	9·50	12·55	12·1	0·48	0·63	0·6	−1·44	−1·90	−1·8
NIC	6·89	9·10	8·8	6·89	9·10	8·8	6·89	9·10	8·8	6·89	9·10	8·8
Total	21·47	28·37	27·3	16·39	21·66	20·8	7·37	9·74	9·4	5·45	7·20	6·9
1983-84												
Income tax	15·35	19·38	18·0	9·53	12·03	11·1	0·00	0·00	0·0	−2·65	−3·35	−3·1
NIC	7·70	9·72	9·0	7·70	9·72	9·0	7·70	9·72	9·0	7·70	9·72	9·0
Total	23·05	29·10	27·0	17·23	21·75	20·2	7·70	9·72	9·0	5·05	6·38	5·9
1984-85												
Income tax	16·18	19·44	17·5	9·55	11·48	10·3	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·71	−4·46	−4·0
NIC	8·33	10·01	9·0	8·33	10·01	9·0	8·33	10·01	9·0	8·33	10·01	9·0
Total	24·51	29·45	26·5	17·88	21·49	19·3	8·33	10·01	9·0	4·62	5·55	5·0
1985-86												
Income tax	17·05	19·34	17·2	9·84	11·16	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·96	−4·49	−4·0
NIC	8·93	10·13	9·0	8·93	10·13	9·0	7·54	8·55	7·6	8·93	10·13	9·0
Total	25·98	29·48	26·2	18·77	21·30	18·9	7·54	8·55	7·6	4·97	5·64	5·0
1986-87												
Income tax	17·92	19·69	16·8	10·56	11·61	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·64	−4·00	−3·4
NIC	9·60	10·55	9·0	9·60	10·55	9·0	6·62	7·28	6·2	9·60	10·55	9·0
Total	27·52	30·25	25·8	20·16	22·16	18·9	6·62	7·28	6·2	5·96	6·55	5·6
1987-88												
Income tax	18·94	20·03	16·2	11·83	12·51	10·1	0·00	0·00	0·0	−2·67	−2·82	−2·3
NIC	10·51	11·11	9·0	10·51	11·11	9·0	7·24	7·66	6·2	10·51	11·11	9·0
Total	29·45	31·14	25·2	22·34	23·62	19·1	7·24	7·66	6·2	7·84	8·29	6·7
1988-89												
Income tax	19·24	19·24	15·1	12·08	12·08	9·5	0·00	0·00	0·0	−2·42	−2·42	−1·9
NIC	11·43	11·43	9·0	11·43	11·43	9·0	7·88	7·88	6·2	11·43	11·43	9·0
Total	30·67	30·67	24·1	23·51	23·51	18·5	7·88	7·88	6·2	9·01	9·01	7·1

75 per cent. of average male earnings (£190·57 a week in 1988/89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	15·56	33·06	22·04	12·07	25·65	17·3	5·28	11·22	7·6	5·66	12·03	8·1
NIC	4·52	9·60	6·5	4·52	9·60	6·5	4·52	9·60	6·5	4·52	9·60	6·5
VAT	1·80	3·82	2·6	1·67	3·54	2·4	2·02	4·30	2·9	1·82	3·88	2·6
Other indirect	6·24	13·26	9·0	7·19	15·29	10·3	8·27	17·58	11·9	7·00	14·87	10·1
Total of above	28·12	59·75	40·4	25·45	54·08	36·6	20·10	42·70	28·9	19·00	40·38	27·3
Domestic rates	2·38	5·07	3·4	2·35	4·99	3·4	2·89	6·13	4·1	2·37	5·03	3·4
Total	30·50	64·81	43·8	27·80	59·07	39·9	22·98	48·84	33·0	21·37	45·41	30·7
1979/80												
Income tax	17·15	31·46	20·9	13·40	24·58	16·3	6·17	11·32	7·5	5·40	9·91	6·6
NIC	5·33	9·78	6·5	5·33	9·78	6·5	5·33	9·78	6·5	5·33	9·78	6·5
VAT	3·33	6·10	4·1	3·03	5·56	3·7	3·62	6·64	4·4	3·37	6·19	4·1
Other indirect	7·04	12·92	8·6	8·02	14·70	9·8	9·16	16·81	11·2	7·87	14·45	9·6
Total of above	32·85	60·26	40·1	29·78	54·62	36·3	24·28	44·54	29·6	21·98	40·32	26·8
Domestic rates	2·84	5·20	3·5	2·79	5·11	3·4	3·42	6·28	4·2	2·81	5·16	3·4
Total	35·69	65·47	43·5	32·56	59·73	39·7	27·70	50·82	33·8	24·79	45·48	30·2
1980/81												
Income tax	21·63	34·12	21·9	17·19	27·11	17·4	9·26	14·61	9·4	8·65	13·64	8·8
NIC	6·65	10·49	6·7	6·65	10·49	6·7	6·65	10·49	6·7	6·65	10·49	6·7
VAT	4·09	6·45	4·1	3·77	5·95	3·8	4·44	7·01	4·5	4·10	6·47	4·2
Other indirect	8·26	13·04	8·4	9·39	14·80	9·5	10·66	16·82	10·8	9·18	14·48	9·3
Total of above	40·63	64·09	41·2	37·00	58·36	37·5	31·02	48·92	31·5	28·58	45·08	29·0
Domestic rates	3·71	5·85	3·8	3·62	5·70	3·7	4·37	6·90	4·4	3·65	5·76	3·7
Total	44·34	69·94	45·0	40·61	64·06	41·2	35·39	55·82	35·9	32·23	50·84	32·7

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988/89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1981/82												
Income tax	24·89	35·21	22·7	20·45	28·93	18·7	12·52	17·71	11·4	10·59	14·98	9·7
NIC	8·48	12·00	7·7	8·48	12·00	7·7	8·48	12·00	7·7	8·48	12·00	7·7
VAT	4·53	6·40	4·1	4·11	5·82	3·8	4·80	6·79	4·4	4·55	6·43	4·2
Other indirect	9·61	13·60	8·8	10·89	15·40	9·9	12·38	17·52	11·3	10·80	15·28	9·9
Total of above	47·51	67·22	43·4	43·93	62·15	40·1	38·19	54·03	34·9	34·41	48·69	31·5
Domestic rates	4·56	6·45	4·2	4·45	6·30	4·1	5·43	7·68	5·0	4·50	6·36	4·1
Total	52·06	73·66	47·6	48·38	68·45	44·2	43·62	61·71	39·9	38·91	55·05	35·6
1982-83												
Income tax	26·39	34·87	22·4	21·31	28·16	18·1	12·28	16·23	10·4	10·37	13·70	8·8
NIC	10·33	13·65	8·8	10·33	13·65	8·8	10·33	13·65	8·8	10·33	13·65	8·8
VAT	4·68	6·19	4·0	4·25	5·62	3·6	5·01	6·62	4·2	4·74	6·27	4·0
Other indirect	10·01	13·23	8·5	11·39	15·05	9·7	13·04	17·23	11·0	11·27	14·90	9·5
Total of above	51·42	67·94	43·6	47·28	62·48	40·1	40·66	53·72	34·4	36·72	48·51	31·1
Domestic rates	4·98	6·58	4·2	4·89	6·47	4·1	6·01	7·94	5·1	4·94	6·53	4·2
Total	56·40	74·52	47·8	52·18	68·94	44·2	46·67	61·67	39·5	41·65	55·04	35·3
1983-84												
Income tax	28·18	35·57	22·0	22·35	28·21	17·4	12·05	15·21	9·4	10·17	12·84	7·9
NIC	11·54	14·57	9·0	11·54	14·57	9·0	11·54	14·57	9·0	11·54	14·57	9·0
VAT	5·20	6·56	4·1	4·75	5·99	3·7	5·63	7·11	4·4	5·30	6·70	4·1
Other indirect	10·95	13·83	8·5	12·45	15·72	9·7	14·32	18·08	11·2	12·31	15·54	9·6
Total of above	55·87	70·53	43·6	51·09	64·50	39·8	43·54	54·96	33·9	39·32	49·64	30·7
Domestic rates	5·04	6·37	3·9	4·96	6·27	3·9	6·09	7·69	4·8	5·02	6·34	3·9
Total	60·91	76·90	47·5	56·05	70·76	43·7	49·63	62·65	38·7	44·35	55·99	34·6
1984-85												
Income tax	30·06	36·12	21·7	23·42	28·14	16·9	11·86	14·25	8·5	10·16	12·21	7·3
NIC	12·49	15·01	9·0	12·49	15·01	9·0	12·49	15·01	9·0	12·49	15·01	9·0
VAT	6·35	7·63	4·6	6·02	7·24	4·3	6·99	8·39	5·0	6·40	7·69	4·6
Other indirect	11·82	14·21	8·5	13·48	16·20	9·7	15·52	18·66	11·2	13·39	16·10	9·7
Total of above	60·72	72·97	43·8	55·41	66·59	39·9	46·86	56·31	33·8	42·44	51·00	30·6
Domestic rates	5·45	6·55	3·9	5·35	6·43	3·9	6·52	7·84	4·7	5·44	6·54	3·9
Total	66·17	79·51	47·7	60·76	73·02	43·8	53·38	64·15	38·5	47·88	57·54	34·5
1985-86												
Income tax	31·94	36·24	21·5	24·73	28·06	16·6	12·01	13·63	8·1	10·93	12·40	7·3
NIC	13·40	15·20	9·0	13·40	15·20	9·0	11·91	13·51	8·0	13·40	15·20	9·0
VAT	7·04	7·99	4·7	6·66	7·56	4·5	7·88	8·94	5·3	7·00	7·94	4·7
Other indirect	12·46	14·14	8·4	14·21	16·12	9·5	16·57	18·80	11·1	14·07	15·97	9·5
Total of above	64·85	73·57	43·6	59·00	66·94	39·6	48·37	54·88	32·5	45·40	51·51	30·5
Domestic rates	5·85	6·63	3·9	5·76	6·53	3·9	7·08	8·03	4·8	5·82	6·61	3·9
Total	70·69	80·20	47·5	64·76	73·47	43·5	55·45	62·91	37·2	51·23	58·12	34·4
1986-87												
Income tax	33·39	36·70	20·9	26·03	28·61	16·3	13·01	14·30	8·1	11·83	13·00	7·4
NIC	14·40	15·83	9·0	14·40	15·83	9·0	13·12	14·42	8·2	14·40	15·83	9·0
VAT	7·60	8·35	4·7	7·15	7·86	4·5	8·36	9·19	5·2	7·44	8·17	4·6
Other indirect	13·50	14·84	8·4	15·28	16·80	9·5	17·84	19·61	11·1	15·22	16·73	9·5
Total of above	68·89	75·71	43·0	62·86	69·09	39·3	52·33	57·51	32·7	48·89	53·73	30·5
Domestic rates	6·57	7·22	4·1	6·45	7·09	4·0	7·93	8·71	5·0	6·50	7·14	4·1
Total	75·46	82·93	47·1	69·32	76·18	43·3	60·26	66·23	37·6	55·39	60·87	34·6
1987-88												
Income tax	34·71	36·70	19·8	27·60	29·18	15·8	15·01	15·87	8·6	13·10	13·85	7·5
NIC	15·77	16·67	9·0	15·77	16·67	9·0	14·37	15·19	8·2	15·77	16·67	9·0
VAT	8·47	8·96	4·8	7·88	8·33	4·5	9·05	9·57	5·2	8·06	8·52	4·6
Other indirect	14·23	15·04	8·1	15·93	16·84	9·1	18·52	19·59	10·6	15·83	16·73	9·0
Total of above	73·18	77·38	41·8	67·17	71·03	38·3	56·95	60·22	32·5	52·75	55·78	30·1
Domestic rates	7·05	7·46	4·0	6·90	7·30	3·9	8·47	9·96	4·8	6·89	7·29	3·9
Total	80·23	84·84	45·8	74·08	78·33	42·3	65·43	69·18	37·3	59·65	63·07	34·0
1988-89												
Income tax	35·12	35·12	18·4	27·96	27·96	14·7	15·43	15·43	8·1	13·46	13·46	7·1
NIC	17·15	17·15	9·0	17·15	17·15	9·0	15·63	15·63	8·2	17·15	17·15	9·0
VAT	9·63	9·63	5·1	8·97	8·97	4·7	10·20	10·20	5·4	9·12	9·12	4·8
Other indirect	15·49	15·49	8·1	17·26	17·26	9·1	19·81	19·81	10·4	16·95	16·95	8·9
Total of above	77·39	77·39	40·6	71·34	71·34	37·4	61·07	61·07	32·0	56·68	56·68	29·7
Domestic rates	8·20	8·20	4·3	7·95	7·95	4·2	9·66	9·66	5·1	7·93	7·93	4·2
Total	85·59	85·59	44·9	79·29	79·29	41·6	70·73	70·73	37·1	64·62	64·62	33·9

100 per cent. average male earnings (£254·10 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	23·32	49·34	25·0	19·73	41·92	21·3	12·32	26·18	13·3	13·32	28·30	14·4
NIC	6·03	12·81	6·5	6·03	12·81	6·5	6·03	12·81	6·5	6·03	12·81	6·5
VAT	2·48	5·26	2·7	2·38	5·07	2·6	2·79	5·94	3·0	2·44	6·19	2·6
Other indirect	7·59	16·12	8·2	8·55	18·17	9·2	9·57	20·33	10·3	7·98	16·95	8·6
Total of above	39·31	83·53	42·4	36·70	77·97	39·5	30·71	65·26	33·1	29·77	63·2	32·1
Domestic rates	2·87	6·10	3·1	2·70	5·74	2·9	3·08	6·54	3·3	2·79	5·92	3·0
Total	42·18	89·63	45·5	19·40	83·72	42·5	33·79	71·79	36·4	32·56	69·18	35·1
1979-80												
Income tax	25·35	46·51	23·2	21·60	39·63	19·8	14·16	25·98	13·0	13·60	24·95	12·4
NIC	7·10	13·03	6·5	7·10	13·03	6·5	7·10	13·03	6·5	7·10	13·03	6·5
VAT	4·60	8·43	4·2	4·36	8·00	4·0	5·01	9·19	4·6	4·53	8·30	4·1
Other indirect	8·67	15·91	7·9	9·65	17·70	8·8	10·69	19·61	9·8	9·13	16·75	8·4
Total of above	45·72	83·87	41·8	42·71	78·36	39·1	36·96	67·80	33·8	34·36	63·03	31·4
Domestic rates	3·43	6·30	3·1	3·22	5·91	2·9	3·65	6·69	3·3	3·33	6·10	3·0
Total	49·15	90·18	45·0	45·93	84·27	42·0	40·61	74·50	37·2	37·68	69·13	34·5
1980-81												
Income tax	31·49	49·67	24·0	27·05	42·67	20·6	19·11	30·14	14·5	18·51	29·20	14·1
NIC	8·87	13·99	6·8	8·87	13·99	6·8	8·87	13·99	6·8	8·87	13·99	6·8
VAT	5·65	8·90	4·3	5·41	8·53	4·1	6·13	9·67	4·7	5·52	8·70	4·2
Other indirect	10·21	16·11	7·8	11·33	17·88	8·6	12·44	19·63	9·5	10·70	16·87	8·1
Total of above	56·22	88·67	42·8	52·66	83·06	40·1	46·55	73·43	35·4	43·59	68·76	33·2
Domestic rates	4·51	7·12	3·4	4·20	6·62	3·2	4·67	7·37	3·6	4·34	6·85	3·3
Total	60·73	95·79	46·2	56·86	89·69	43·3	51·23	80·80	39·0	47·93	75·61	36·5
1981-82												
Income tax	35·84	50·71	24·6	31·39	44·41	21·5	23·46	33·19	16·1	21·53	30·46	14·8
NIC	11·31	16·00	7·8	11·31	16·00	7·8	11·31	16·00	7·8	11·31	16·00	7·8
VAT	6·29	8·89	4·3	5·96	8·43	4·1	6·71	9·49	4·6	6·14	8·69	4·2
Other indirect	11·87	16·80	8·1	13·15	18·61	9·0	14·44	20·43	9·9	12·54	17·74	8·6
Total of above	65·31	92·40	44·8	61·81	87·45	42·4	55·92	79·11	38·3	51·53	72·90	35·3
Domestic rates	5·54	7·84	3·8	5·17	7·31	3·5	5·80	8·20	4·0	5·34	7·56	3·7
Total	70·85	100·24	48·6	66·98	94·76	45·9	61·71	87·31	42·3	56·87	80·45	39·0
1982-83												
Income tax	38·19	50·46	24·3	33·11	43·75	21·0	24·09	31·83	15·3	22·17	29·29	14·1
NIC	13·77	18·19	8·7	13·77	18·19	8·7	13·77	18·19	8·7	13·77	18·19	8·7
VAT	6·50	8·59	4·1	6·16	8·14	3·9	6·98	9·23	4·4	6·40	8·45	4·1
Other indirect	12·38	16·35	7·9	13·74	18·15	8·7	15·16	20·03	9·6	13·09	17·29	8·3
Total of above	70·84	93·60	45·0	66·78	88·24	42·4	60·00	79·28	38·1	55·42	73·23	35·2
Domestic rates	6·05	7·99	3·8	5·67	7·49	3·6	6·41	8·47	4·1	5·85	7·73	3·7
Total	76·89	101·59	48·8	72·45	95·73	46·0	66·41	87·75	42·2	61·27	80·96	38·9
1983-84												
Income tax	41·00	51·76	24·0	35·18	44·41	20·6	24·88	31·41	14·5	23·00	29·04	13·5
NIC	15·39	19·43	9·0	15·39	19·43	9·0	15·39	19·43	9·0	15·39	19·43	9·0
VAT	7·20	9·09	4·2	6·85	8·65	4·0	7·80	9·85	4·6	7·12	8·99	4·2
Other indirect	13·55	17·11	7·9	15·02	18·96	8·8	16·65	21·02	9·7	14·30	18·05	8·4
Total of above	77·14	97·39	45·1	72·44	91·45	42·4	64·72	81·71	37·9	59·81	75·51	35·0
Domestic rates	6·12	7·72	3·6	5·74	7·25	3·4	6·49	8·20	3·8	5·94	7·50	3·5
Total	83·26	105·11	48·7	78·18	98·70	45·7	71·22	89·90	41·6	65·76	83·01	38·5
1984-85												
Income tax	43·93	52·79	23·7	37·30	44·82	20·2	25·73	30·92	13·9	24·04	28·89	13·0
NIC	16·65	20·01	9·0	16·65	20·01	9·0	16·65	20·01	9·0	16·65	20·01	9·0
VAT	8·46	10·17	4·6	8·32	10·00	4·5	9·48	11·40	5·1	9·00	10·82	4·9
Other indirect	14·56	17·50	7·9	16·24	19·51	8·8	17·98	21·60	9·7	15·46	18·58	8·4
Total of above	83·61	100·47	45·2	78·51	94·34	42·4	69·84	83·93	37·8	65·15	78·29	35·2
Domestic rates	6·61	7·94	3·6	6·19	7·44	3·3	6·96	8·36	3·8	6·43	7·73	3·5
Total	90·21	108·41	48·8	84·70	101·79	45·8	76·80	92·29	41·5	71·59	86·02	38·7
1985-86												
Income tax	46·83	53·13	23·6	39·62	44·95	20·0	26·90	30·52	13·6	25·82	29·29	13·0
NIC	17·87	20·27	9·0	17·87	20·27	9·0	17·07	19·37	8·6	17·87	20·27	9·0
VAT	9·39	10·65	4·7	9·21	10·45	4·6	10·59	12·01	5·3	9·89	11·22	5·0
Other indirect	15·36	17·42	7·7	17·11	19·41	8·6	19·09	21·65	9·6	16·25	18·44	8·2
Total of above	89·44	101·47	45·1	83·81	95·09	42·2	73·64	83·55	37·1	69·83	79·23	35·2
Domestic rates	7·08	8·04	3·6	6·66	7·55	3·4	7·53	8·54	3·8	6·88	7·81	3·5
Total	96·53	109·51	48·6	90·47	102·64	45·6	81·17	92·09	40·9	76·71	87·03	38·6
1986-87												

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
Income tax	48·86	53·70	22·9	41·50	45·61	19·4	28·48	31·30	13·3	27·30	30·00	12·8
NIC	19·21	21·11	9·0	19·21	21·11	9·0	17·50	19·23	8·2	19·21	21·11	9·0
VAT	10·15	11·15	4·8	9·92	10·90	4·6	11·41	12·54	5·3	10·58	11·63	5·0
Other indirect	16·69	18·34	7·8	18·49	20·32	8·7	20·72	22·77	9·7	17·68	19·43	8·3
Total of above	94·91	104·31	44·5	89·12	97·95	41·8	78·11	85·85	36·6	74·77	82·17	35·0
Domestic rates	7·97	8·76	3·7	7·47	8·21	3·5	8·46	9·29	4·0	7·70	8·46	3·6
Total	102·88	113·06	48·2	96·59	106·16	45·3	86·57	95·14	40·6	82·47	90·63	38·6
1987-88												
Income tax	50·48	53·38	21·6	43·37	45·86	18·6	30·78	32·55	13·2	28·87	30·53	12·4
NIC	21·02	22·23	9·0	21·02	22·23	9·0	19·16	20·26	8·2	21·02	22·23	9·0
VAT	11·37	12·02	4·9	11·02	11·66	4·7	12·50	13·22	5·4	11·62	12·29	5·0
Other indirect	17·73	18·74	7·6	19·43	20·54	8·3	21·69	22·93	9·3	18·59	19·66	8·0
Total of above	100·59	106·37	43·1	94·84	100·28	40·6	84·13	88·96	36·0	80·10	84·70	34·3
Domestic rates	8·58	9·07	3·7	8·01	8·47	3·4	9·05	9·57	3·9	8·20	8·67	3·5
Total	109·17	115·44	46·7	102·85	108·75	44·0	93·19	98·53	39·9	88·31	93·37	37·8
1988-89												
Income tax	51·00	51·00	20·1	43·84	43·84	17·3	31·31	31·31	12·3	29·34	29·34	11·5
NIC	22·87	22·87	9·0	22·87	22·87	9·0	20·84	20·84	8·2	22·87	22·87	9·0
VAT	12·94	12·94	5·1	12·58	12·58	4·9	14·15	14·15	5·6	13·20	13·20	5·2
Other indirect	19·35	19·35	7·6	21·14	21·14	8·3	23·31	23·31	9·2	20·01	20·01	7·9
Total of above	106·17	106·17	41·8	100·42	100·42	39·5	89·61	89·61	35·3	85·42	85·42	33·6
Domestic rates	10·01	10·01	3·9	9·27	9·27	3·6	10·34	10·34	4·1	9·48	9·48	3·7
Total	116·18	116·18	45·7	109·69	109·69	43·2	99·95	99·95	39·3	94·90	94·90	37·3

150 per cent. of average male earnings (£381·15 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	38·53	81·87	27·7	35·04	74·45	25·2	27·64	58·73	19·9	28·63	60·83	20·6
NIC	7·80	16·57	5·6	7·80	16·57	5·6	9·05	19·23	6·5	7·80	16·57	5·6
VAT	3·89	8·27	2·8	3·88	8·25	2·8	4·27	9·07	3·1	3·74	7·95	2·7
Other indirect	10·40	22·10	7·5	11·39	24·21	8·2	12·05	25·59	8·7	10·01	21·28	7·2
Total of above	60·62	128·80	43·5	58·11	123·48	41·7	53·01	112·63	38·1	50·19	106·64	36·1
Domestic rates	3·89	8·27	2·8	3·44	7·32	2·5	3·44	7·31	2·5	3·66	7·78	2·6
Total rates	64·51	137·08	46·3	61·56	130·80	44·2	56·45	119·94	40·6	53·85	114·42	38·7
1979-80												
Income tax	41·74	76·57	25·5	37·99	69·69	23·2	30·55	56·04	18·6	29·99	55·02	18·3
NIC	8·78	16·11	5·4	8·78	16·11	5·4	10·66	19·56	6·5	8·78	16·11	5·4
VAT	7·27	13·35	4·4	7·17	13·16	4·4	7·76	14·24	4·7	6·96	12·76	4·2
Other indirect	12·11	22·21	7·4	13·10	24·03	8·0	13·70	25·14	8·4	11·78	21·61	7·2
Total of above	69·90	128·24	42·6	67·04	122·99	40·9	62·67	114·98	38·2	57·51	105·50	35·1
Domestic rates	4·70	8·61	2·9	4·13	7·58	2·5	4·09	7·51	2·5	4·41	8·08	2·7
Total	74·60	136·85	45·5	71·18	130·57	43·4	66·77	122·49	40·7	61·91	113·58	37·8
1980-81												
Income tax	51·20	80·76	26·0	46·76	73·76	23·7	38·82	61·23	19·7	38·22	60·29	19·4
NIC	11·14	17·57	5·7	11·14	17·57	5·7	13·30	20·98	6·7	11·14	17·57	5·7
VAT	8·93	14·08	4·5	8·85	13·96	4·5	9·51	15·00	4·8	8·50	13·40	4·3
Other indirect	14·31	22·57	7·3	15·43	24·34	7·8	16·00	25·24	8·1	13·89	21·91	7·0
Total of above	85·58	134·98	43·4	82·19	129·63	41·7	77·63	122·45	39·4	71·74	113·16	36·4
Domestic rates	6·20	9·78	3·1	5·42	8·56	2·8	5·27	8·32	2·7	5·79	9·13	2·9
Total	91·78	144·76	46·6	87·61	138·19	44·5	82·90	130·76	42·1	77·53	122·29	39·3
1981-82												
Income tax	57·72	81·66	26·4	53·28	75·38	24·3	45·35	64·16	20·7	43·42	61·43	19·8
NIC	15·50	21·93	7·1	15·50	21·93	7·1	16·96	23·99	7·7	15·50	21·93	7·1
VAT	9·92	14·03	4·5	9·78	13·83	4·5	10·52	14·88	4·8	9·44	13·36	4·3
Other indirect	16·54	23·40	7·6	17·83	25·22	8·1	18·55	24·24	8·5	16·14	22·83	7·4
Total of above	99·68	141·02	45·5	96·38	136·36	44·0	91·38	129·28	41·8	84·50	119·55	38·6
Domestic rates	7·58	10·23	3·5	6·65	9·41	3·0	6·53	9·24	3·0	7·09	10·03	3·2
Total	107·26	151·25	49·0	103·03	145·77	47·1	97·91	138·52	44·7	91·59	129·58	41·8
1982-83												
Income tax	61·80	81·66	26·2	56·72	74·95	24·0	47·70	63·03	20·2	45·78	60·49	19·4
NIC	19·25	25·44	8·2	19·25	25·44	8·2	20·66	27·30	8·8	19·25	25·44	8·2
VAT	10·25	13·54	4·3	10·10	13·34	4·3	10·92	14·43	4·6	9·80	12·94	4·1

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
Other indirect	17·24	22·79	7·3	18·56	24·53	7·9	19·40	25·63	8·2	16·82	22·22	7·1
Total of above	108·54	143·42	46·0	104·63	138·25	44·3	98·68	130·39	41·8	91·65	121·09	38·8
Domestic rates	8·24	10·88	3·5	7·26	9·59	3·1	7·20	9·52	3·1	7·73	10·21	3·3
Total	116·78	154·32	49·5	111·89	147·84	47·4	105·88	139·91	44·8	99·37	131·31	42·1
1983-84												
Income tax	66·65	84·14	26·0	60·83	76·79	23·7	50·53	63·79	19·7	48·65	61·42	19·0
NIC	21·15	26·70	8·2	21·15	26·70	8·2	23·09	29·15	9·0	21·15	26·70	8·2
VAT	11·36	14·34	4·4	11·22	14·16	4·4	12·14	15·33	4·7	10·90	13·76	4·2
Other indirect	18·95	23·92	7·4	20·34	25·68	7·9	21·33	26·92	8·3	18·43	23·26	7·2
Total of above	118·10	149·10	46·0	113·54	143·33	44·3	107·09	135·19	41·8	99·13	125·14	38·6
Domestic rates	8·34	10·53	3·3	7·36	9·29	2·9	7·29	9·21	2·8	7·85	9·91	3·1
Total	126·45	159·63	49·3	120·90	152·62	47·1	114·38	144·40	44·6	106·98	135·05	41·7
1984-85												
Income tax	71·68	86·14	25·8	65·05	78·17	23·4	53·48	64·27	19·3	51·79	62·24	18·7
NIC	22·50	27·04	8·1	22·50	27·04	8·1	24·98	30·02	9·0	22·50	27·04	8·1
VAT	12·88	15·48	4·6	13·13	15·78	4·7	14·48	17·40	5·2	14·45	17·36	5·2
Other indirect	20·28	24·37	7·3	21·98	26·42	7·9	22·88	27·50	8·2	19·77	23·76	7·1
Total of above	127·34	153·02	45·9	122·66	147·40	44·2	115·83	139·19	41·7	108·51	130·39	39·1
Domestic rates	9·03	10·85	3·3	7·95	9·56	2·9	7·82	9·40	2·8	8·51	10·22	3·1
Total	136·37	163·88	49·1	130·62	156·96	47·1	123·65	148·59	44·6	117·02	140·62	42·2
1985-86												
Income tax	76·60	86·91	25·7	69·39	78·73	23·3	56·67	64·29	19·0	55·9	63·07	18·7
NIC	23·85	27·06	8·0	23·85	27·06	8·0	26·80	30·41	9·0	23·85	27·06	8·0
VAT	14·30	16·23	4·8	14·56	16·52	4·9	16·05	18·21	5·4	15·95	18·10	5·4
Other indirect	21·42	24·30	7·2	23·19	26·31	7·8	24·17	27·42	8·1	20·82	23·62	7·0
Total of above	136·18	154·50	45·7	131·00	148·62	44·0	123·69	140·33	41·5	116·21	131·85	39·0
Domestic rates	9·68	10·98	3·3	8·54	9·69	2·9	8·44	9·58	2·8	9·10	10·33	3·1
Total	145·86	165·48	49·0	139·54	158·31	46·9	132·13	149·91	44·4	125·32	142·18	42·1
1986-87												
Income tax	79·81	87·71	24·9	72·45	79·62	22·6	59·42	65·30	18·6	58·25	64·02	18·2
NIC	25·65	28·19	8·0	25·65	28·19	8·0	28·81	31·66	9·0	25·65	28·19	8·0
VAT	15·49	17·02	4·8	15·74	17·29	4·9	17·28	18·99	5·4	17·16	18·86	5·4
Other indirect	23·37	25·69	7·3	25·21	27·71	7·9	26·26	28·86	8·2	22·84	25·10	7·1
Total of above	144·32	158·61	45·1	139·05	152·81	43·4	131·77	144·82	41·2	123·90	136·17	38·7
Domestic rates	10·91	11·99	3·4	9·60	10·55	3·0	9·47	10·41	3·0	10·21	11·22	3·2
Total	155·23	170·60	48·5	148·65	163·37	46·4	141·24	155·23	44·1	134·11	147·39	41·9
1987-88												
Income tax	82·02	86·73	23·4	74·90	79·20	21·4	62·31	65·89	17·8	60·40	63·81	17·2
NIC	26·55	28·07	7·6	26·55	28·07	7·6	31·54	33·35	9·0	26·55	28·07	7·6
VAT	17·53	18·54	5·0	17·74	18·76	5·1	19·16	20·26	5·5	19·23	10·34	5·5
Other indirect	25·19	26·64	7·2	26·88	28·43	7·7	27·79	29·38	7·9	24·49	29·89	7·0
Total of above	151·30	159·98	43·2	146·08	154·46	41·7	140·80	148·88	40·2	130·67	138·17	37·3
Domestic rates	11·84	12·52	3·4	10·38	10·97	3·0	10·16	10·75	2·9	10·99	11·62	3·1
Total	163·14	172·50	46·6	156·45	165·43	44·6	150·97	159·63	43·1	141·66	149·29	40·4
1988-89												
Income tax	82·76	82·76	21·7	75·60	75·60	19·8	63·08	63·08	16·5	61·10	61·10	16·0
NIC	27·45	27·45	7·2	27·45	27·45	7·2	34·30	34·30	9·0	27·45	27·45	7·2
VAT	20·10	20·10	5·3	20·37	20·37	5·3	21·78	21·78	5·7	22·03	22·03	5·8
Other indirect	27·12	27·12	7·3	29·53	29·53	7·7	30·04	30·04	7·9	26·61	26·61	7·0
Total of above	158·04	158·04	41·5	152·96	152·96	40·1	149·20	149·20	39·1	137·19	137·19	36·0
Domestic rates	13·94	13·94	3·7	12·12	12·12	3·2	11·66	11·66	3·1	12·58	12·58	3·4
Total	171·97	171·97	45·1	165·08	165·08	43·3	160·87	160·87	42·2	150·04	150·04	39·4

200 per cent. average male earnings
(£508·20 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	54·74	116·31	29·5	50·51	107·32	27·2	42·95	91·26	23·1	43·94	93·36	23·7
NIC	7·80	16·57	4·2	7·80	16·57	4·2	12·06	25·62	6·5	7·80	16·57	4·2
Total	62·54	132·88	33·7	58·31	123·90	31·4	55·01	116·88	29·6	51·74	109·94	27·9
1979-80												

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
Income tax	58·53	107·38	26·8	54·39	99·78	24·9	46·95	86·13	21·5	46·39	85·10	21·2
NIC	8·78	16·11	4·0	8·78	16·11	4·0	14·21	26·07	6·5	8·78	16·11	4·0
Total	67·31	123·48	30·8	63·17	115·89	28·9	61·16	112·20	28·0	55·17	101·21	25·2
1980-81												
Income tax	72·91	115·00	27·7	66·99	105·66	25·5	58·53	92·32	22·3	58·45	92·19	22·2
NIC	11·14	17·57	4·2	11·14	17·57	4·2	17·74	27·98	6·8	11·14	17·57	4·2
Total	84·05	132·57	32·0	78·13	123·24	29·7	76·27	120·30	29·0	69·59	109·77	26·5
1981-82												
Income tax	85·04	120·31	29·1	78·59	111·19	26·9	68·01	96·22	23·3	68·73	97·24	23·6
NIC	15·50	21·93	5·3	15·50	21·93	5·3	22·61	31·99	7·7	15·50	21·93	5·3
Total	100·54	142·24	34·5	94·09	133·12	32·2	90·62	128·21	31·1	84·23	119·17	28·9
1982-83												
Income tax	89·27	117·95	28·4	82·50	109·01	26·2	71·31	94·22	22·7	71·56	94·55	22·7
NIC	19·25	25·44	6·1	19·25	25·44	6·1	27·54	36·39	8·7	19·25	25·44	6·1
Total	108·52	143·39	34·5	101·75	134·44	32·3	98·85	130·61	31·4	90·81	119·99	28·8
1983-84												
Income tax	94·99	119·92	27·8	87·22	110·11	25·5	76·18	96·17	22·3	75·04	94·73	21·9
NIC	21·15	26·70	6·2	21·15	26·70	6·2	30·78	38·86	9·0	21·15	26·70	6·2
Total	116·14	146·62	34·0	108·37	136·81	31·7	106·96	135·03	31·3	96·19	121·43	28·1
1984-85												
Income tax	102·96	123·73	27·8	94·12	113·10	25·4	81·23	97·61	22·0	80·86	97·17	21·9
NIC	22·50	27·04	6·1	22·50	27·04	6·1	33·30	40·02	9·0	22·50	27·04	6·1
Total	125·46	150·76	33·9	116·62	140·14	31·5	114·53	137·63	31·0	103·36	124·21	27·9
1985-86												
Income tax	110·68	125·57	27·9	101·07	114·67	25·5	86·45	98·08	21·8	87·27	99·01	22·0
NIC	23·85	27·06	6·0	23·85	27·06	6·0	35·73	40·54	9·0	23·85	27·06	6·0
Total	134·53	152·63	33·9	124·92	141·73	31·5	122·18	138·62	30·8	111·12	126·07	28·0
1986-87												
Income tax	116·37	127·89	27·3	106·22	116·74	24·9	90·37	99·32	21·2	92·02	101·13	21·6
NIC	25·65	28·19	6·0	25·65	28·19	6·0	38·41	42·21	9·0	25·65	28·19	6·0
Total	142·02	156·08	33·3	131·87	144·93	30·9	128·78	141·53	30·2	117·67	129·32	27·6
1987-88												
Income tax	124·89	132·06	26·7	113·03	119·52	24·2	94·28	99·69	20·2	98·53	104·18	21·1
NIC	26·55	28·07	5·7	26·55	28·07	5·7	42·05	44·46	9·0	26·55	28·07	5·7
Total	151·44	160·13	32·4	139·58	147·59	29·9	136·33	144·15	29·2	125·08	132·26	26·8
1988-89												
Income tax	127·57	127·57	25·1	116·11	116·11	22·8	96·07	96·07	18·9	101·61	101·61	20·0
NIC	27·45	27·45	5·4	27·45	27·45	5·4	45·74	45·74	9·0	27·45	27·45	5·4
Total	155·02	155·02	30·5	143·56	143·56	28·2	141·81	141·81	27·9	129·06	129·06	25·4

300 per cent. of average male earnings (£762·30 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	102·89	218·62	37·0	96·54	205·13	34·7	77·06	163·74	27·7	89·09	189·30	32·0
NIC	7·80	16·57	2·8	7·80	16·57	2·8	15·04	31·96	5·4	7·80	16·57	2·8
Total	110·69	235·19	39·8	104·34	221·70	37·5	92·10	195·69	33·1	96·89	205·87	34·8
1979-80												
Income tax	106·83	195·98	32·6	100·58	184·52	30·7	83·49	153·17	25·5	92·58	169·84	28·2
NIC	8·78	16·11	2·7	8·78	16·11	2·7	17·30	31·74	5·3	8·78	16·11	2·7
Total	115·61	212·09	35·3	109·36	200·62	33·4	100·79	184·90	30·7	101·36	185·95	30·9
1980-81												
Income tax	133·40	210·41	33·8	125·99	198·73	32·0	102·39	161·50	26·0	117·45	185·26	29·8
NIC	11·14	17·57	2·8	11·14	17·57	2·8	21·78	34·35	5·5	11·14	17·57	2·8
Total	144·54	227·99	36·7	137·13	216·29	34·8	124·17	195·86	31·5	128·59	202·83	32·6
1981-82												
Income tax	155·15	219·51	35·4	147·74	209·02	33·8	117·43	166·14	26·8	137·88	195·07	31·5

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
NIC	15·50	21·93	3·5	15·50	21·93	3·5	29·07	41·13	6·6	15·50	21·93	3·5
Total	170·65	241·43	39·0	163·24	230·95	37·3	146·50	207·27	33·5	153·38	217·00	35·0
1982-83												
Income tax	163·55	216·10	34·6	155·09	204·92	32·8	124·31	164·25	26·3	144·15	190·47	30·5
NIC	19·25	25·44	4·1	19·25	25·44	4·1	35·78	47·28	7·6	19·25	25·44	4·1
Total	182·80	241·54	38·7	174·34	230·36	36·9	160·09	211·53	33·9	163·40	215·90	34·6
1983-84												
Income tax	173·76	219·36	33·9	164·05	207·10	32·0	133·30	168·28	26·0	151·87	191·72	29·6
NIC	21·15	26·70	4·1	21·15	26·70	4·1	39·62	50·02	7·7	21·15	26·70	4·1
Total	194·91	246·06	38·0	185·20	233·80	36·1	172·92	218·30	33·7	173·02	218·42	33·7
1984-85												
Income tax	188·89	226·99	34·0	177·84	213·71	32·0	143·37	172·29	25·8	164·58	197·77	29·7
NIC	22·50	27·04	4·1	22·50	27·04	4·1	42·48	51·05	7·7	22·50	27·04	4·1
Total	211·39	254·02	38·1	200·34	240·75	36·1	185·85	223·33	33·5	187·08	224·81	33·7
1985-86												
Income tax	203·47	230·84	34·2	191·45	217·21	32·1	153·54	174·20	25·8	177·65	201·55	29·8
NIC	23·85	27·06	4·0	23·85	27·06	4·0	45·29	51·38	7·6	23·85	27·06	4·0
Total	227·32	257·90	38·2	215·30	244·27	36·2	198·83	225·58	33·4	201·50	228·61	33·8
1986-87												
Income tax	217·42	238·95	34·0	204·73	225·00	32·0	160·54	176·44	25·1	190·53	209·40	29·8
NIC	25·65	28·19	4·0	25·65	28·19	4·0	48·70	53·52	7·6	25·65	28·19	4·0
Total	243·07	267·14	38·0	230·38	253·19	36·0	209·24	229·96	32·7	216·18	237·59	33·8
1987-88												
Income tax	238·98	252·69	34·1	225·12	238·04	32·1	167·88	177·51	24·0	210·62	222·71	30·1
NIC	26·55	28·07	3·8	26·55	28·07	3·8	51·78	54·75	7·4	26·55	28·07	3·8
Total	265·53	280·77	37·9	251·67	266·11	35·9	219·66	232·27	31·3	237·17	250·78	33·8
1988-89												
Income tax	229·21	229·21	30·1	217·75	217·75	28·6	170·95	170·95	22·4	203·25	203·25	26·7
NIC	27·45	27·45	3·6	27·45	27·45	3·6	54·89	54·89	7·2	27·45	27·45	3·6
Total	256·66	256·66	33·7	245·20	245·20	32·2	225·84	225·84	29·6	230·70	230·70	30·3

400 per cent. of average male earnings
(£1,016·40 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	164·95	350·48	44·4	157·54	334·74	42·4	113·29	240·72	30·5	149·71	318·10	40·3
NIC	7·80	16·57	2·1	7·80	16·57	2·1	15·60	33·15	4·2	7·80	16·57	2·1
Total	172·75	367·06	46·5	165·34	351·31	44·5	128·89	273·86	34·7	157·51	334·68	42·4
1979-80												
Income tax	162·99	299·01	37·3	156·12	286·41	35·7	121·49	222·88	27·8	148·12	271·73	33·9
NIC	8·78	16·11	2·0	8·78	16·11	2·0	17·55	32·20	4·0	8·78	16·11	2·0
Total	171·77	315·12	39·3	164·90	302·51	37·7	139·04	255·07	31·8	156·90	287·84	35·9
1980-81												
Income tax	202·66	319·66	38·6	194·52	306·82	37·0	150·78	237·83	28·7	185·98	293·35	35·4
NIC	11·14	17·57	2·1	11·14	17·57	2·1	22·28	35·14	4·2	11·14	17·57	2·1
Total	213·80	337·23	40·7	205·66	324·39	39·1	173·06	272·97	32·9	197·12	310·92	37·5
1981-82												
Income tax	235·74	333·52	40·4	226·85	320·95	38·9	173·48	245·44	29·7	216·99	307·00	37·2
NIC	15·50	21·93	2·7	15·50	21·93	2·7	31·00	43·86	5·3	15·50	21·93	2·7
Total	251·24	355·45	43·1	242·35	342·88	41·5	204·48	289·30	35·0	232·49	328·93	39·8
1982-83												
Income tax	247·90	327·56	39·4	238·59	315·25	37·9	183·84	242·91	29·2	227·65	300·80	36·2
NIC	19·25	25·44	3·1	19·25	25·44	3·1	38·50	50·87	6·1	19·25	25·44	3·1
Total	267·15	352·99	42·4	257·84	340·69	41·0	222·34	293·78	35·3	246·90	326·24	39·2
1983-84												
Income tax	263·95	333·21	38·6	253·27	319·73	37·0	196·40	247·94	28·7	241·09	304·36	35·2

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
NIC	21·15	26·70	3·1	21·15	26·70	3·1	42·30	53·40	6·2	21·15	26·70	3·1
Total	285·10	359·91	41·7	274·42	346·43	40·1	238·70	301·34	34·9	262·24	331·06	38·3
1984-85												
Income tax	287·04	344·93	38·8	274·88	330·32	37·1	212·57	255·44	28·7	261·62	314·38	35·4
NIC	22·50	27·04	3·0	22·50	27·04	3·0	45·00	54·08	6·1	22·50	27·04	3·0
Total	309·54	371·97	41·8	297·38	357·36	40·2	257·57	309·52	34·8	284·12	341·42	38·4
1985-86												
Income tax	309·24	350·84	38·9	296·02	335·84	37·3	228·24	258·95	28·7	282·22	320·19	35·5
NIC	23·85	27·06	3·0	23·85	27·06	3·0	47·70	54·12	6·0	23·85	27·06	3·0
Total	333·09	377·90	42·0	319·87	362·90	40·3	273·94	313·06	34·8	306·07	347·25	38·5
1986-87												
Income tax	333·35	366·36	39·1	318·57	350·12	37·3	240·45	264·26	28·2	304·37	334·51	35·7
NIC	25·65	28·19	3·0	25·65	28·19	3·0	51·30	56·38	6·0	25·65	28·19	3·0
Total	359·00	394·55	42·1	344·22	378·31	40·3	291·75	320·64	34·2	330·02	362·70	38·7
1987-88												
Income tax	372·24	393·60	39·8	356·43	376·88	38·1	256·54	271·26	27·5	341·93	361·55	36·6
NIC	26·55	28·07	2·8	26·55	28·07	2·8	53·10	56·15	5·7	26·55	28·07	2·8
Total	398·79	421·68	42·7	382·98	404·96	41·0	309·64	327·41	33·1	368·48	389·63	39·4
1988-89												
Income tax	330·85	330·85	32·6	319·39	319·39	31·4	257·34	257·34	25·3	304·89	304·89	30·0
NIC	27·45	27·45	2·7	27·45	27·45	2·7	54·90	54·90	5·4	27·45	27·45	2·7
Total	358·30	358·30	35·3	346·84	346·84	34·1	312·24	312·24	30·7	332·34	332·34	32·7

500 per cent. of average male earnings (£1,270·50 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	234·37	497·99	50·5	226·44	481·14	48·8	157·63	334·93	34·0	218·41	464·08	47·1
NIC	7·80	16·57	1·7	7·80	16·57	1·7	15·60	33·15	3·4	7·80	16·57	1·7
Total	242·17	514·56	52·2	234·24	497·71	50·5	173·23	368·08	37·3	226·21	480·65	48·8
1979-80												
Income tax	225·28	413·28	41·2	217·78	399·52	39·8	165·36	303·36	30·3	209·78	384·85	38·4
NIC	8·78	16·11	1·6	8·78	16·11	1·6	17·55	32·20	3·2	8·78	16·11	1·6
Total	234·06	429·39	42·8	226·56	415·63	41·5	182·91	335·55	33·5	218·56	400·96	40·0
1980-81												
Income tax	279·78	441·30	42·6	270·89	427·28	41·2	206·31	325·42	31·4	262·35	413·81	39·9
NIC	11·14	17·57	1·7	11·14	17·57	1·7	22·28	35·14	3·4	11·14	17·57	1·7
Total	290·92	458·87	44·3	282·03	444·85	42·9	228·59	360·56	34·8	273·49	431·38	41·6
1981-82												
Income tax	323·28	457·38	44·3	314·39	444·80	43·1	240·18	339·81	32·9	304·53	430·85	41·7
NIC	15·50	21·93	2·1	15·50	21·93	2·1	31·00	43·86	4·2	15·50	21·93	2·1
Total	338·78	479·30	46·4	329·89	466·73	45·2	271·18	383·66	37·2	320·03	452·78	43·9
1982-83												
Income tax	342·03	451·93	43·5	331·87	438·51	42·2	252·82	334·06	32·1	320·93	424·05	40·8
NIC	19·25	25·44	2·4	19·25	25·44	2·4	38·50	50·87	4·9	19·25	25·44	2·4
Total	361·28	477·37	45·9	351·12	463·44	44·6	291·32	384·93	37·0	340·18	449·49	43·2
1983-84												
Income tax	364·42	460·05	42·6	352·77	445·34	41·3	268·75	339·27	31·4	340·59	429·97	39·8
NIC	21·15	26·70	2·5	21·15	26·70	2·5	42·30	53·40	4·9	21·15	26·70	2·5
Total	385·57	486·75	45·1	373·92	472·04	43·7	311·05	392·67	36·4	361·74	456·67	42·3
1984-85												
Income tax	396·48	476·44	42·9	383·21	460·50	41·4	291·86	350·72	31·6	369·95	444·56	40·0
NIC	22·50	27·04	2·4	22·50	27·04	2·4	45·00	54·08	4·9	22·50	27·04	2·4
Total	418·98	503·48	45·3	405·71	487·53	43·9	336·86	404·80	36·4	392·45	471·60	42·4
1985-86												
Income tax	427·27	484·75	43·0	412·85	468·39	41·6	314·16	356·43	31·7	399·05	452·74	40·2

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
NIC	23·85	27·06	2·4	23·85	27·06	2·4	47·70	54·12	4·8	23·85	27·06	2·4
Total	451·12	511·81	45·5	436·70	495·45	44·0	361·86	410·54	36·5	422·90	479·79	42·6
1986-87												
Income tax	461·39	507·08	43·2	446·16	490·34	41·8	333·79	366·84	31·3	431·96	474·73	40·5
NIC	25·65	28·19	2·4	25·65	28·19	2·4	51·30	56·38	4·8	25·65	28·19	2·4
Total	487·04	535·27	45·6	471·81	518·53	44·2	385·09	423·22	36·1	457·61	502·92	42·9
1987-88												
Income tax	512·40	541·80	43·9	496·59	525·09	42·5	363·87	384·75	31·2	482·09	509·76	41·3
NIC	26·55	28·07	2·3	26·55	28·07	2·3	53·10	56·15	4·5	26·55	28·07	2·3
Total	538·95	569·88	46·1	523·14	553·16	44·8	416·97	440·90	35·7	508·64	537·83	43·5
1988-89												
Income tax	432·49	432·49	34·0	421·03	421·03	33·1	356·78	356·78	28·1	406·53	406·53	32·0
NIC	27·45	27·45	2·2	27·45	27·45	2·2	54·90	54·90	4·3	27·45	27·45	2·2
Total	459·94	459·94	36·2	448·48	448·48	35·3	411·68	411·68	32·4	433·98	433·98	34·2

700 per cent. of average male earnings
(£1,778·70 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	387·10	822·51	59·6	378·32	803·85	58·2	270·44	574·63	41·6	369·99	786·15	57·0
NIC	7·80	16·57	1·2	7·80	16·57	1·2	15·60	33·15	2·4	7·80	16·57	1·2
Total	394·90	839·08	60·8	386·12	820·42	59·4	286·04	607·77	44·0	377·79	802·72	58·2
1979-80												
Income tax	356·44	653·90	46·6	348·94	640·14	45·6	271·16	497·45	35·4	340·94	625·47	44·6
NIC	8·78	16·11	1·1	8·78	16·11	1·1	17·55	32·20	2·3	8·78	16·11	1·1
Total	365·22	670·01	47·7	357·72	656·25	46·8	288·71	529·65	37·7	349·72	641·57	45·7
1980-81												
Income tax	437·46	690·01	47·6	428·57	675·99	46·6	337·37	532·14	36·7	420·03	662·52	45·7
NIC	11·14	17·57	1·2	11·14	17·57	1·2	22·28	35·14	2·4	11·14	17·57	1·2
Total	448·60	707·59	48·8	439·71	693·56	47·8	359·65	567·28	39·1	431·17	680·09	46·9
1981-82												
Income tax	498·36	705·08	48·8	489·47	692·50	47·9	393·80	557·15	38·6	479·61	678·55	47·0
NIC	15·50	21·93	1·5	15·50	21·93	1·5	31·00	43·86	3·0	15·50	21·93	1·5
Total	513·86	727·01	50·3	504·97	714·43	49·4	424·80	601·01	41·6	495·11	700·48	48·5
1982-83												
Income tax	530·91	701·50	48·2	520·75	688·08	47·3	414·29	547·41	37·6	509·81	673·62	46·3
NIC	19·25	25·44	1·7	19·25	25·44	1·7	38·50	50·87	3·5	19·25	25·44	1·7
Total	550·16	726·94	49·9	540·00	713·52	49·0	452·79	598·28	41·1	529·06	699·06	48·0
1983-84												
Income tax	569·62	719·60	47·6	557·97	704·39	46·6	439·42	554·73	36·7	545·79	689·01	45·6
NIC	21·15	26·70	1·8	21·15	26·70	1·8	42·30	53·40	3·5	21·15	26·70	1·8
Total	590·77	745·80	49·4	579·12	731·09	48·4	481·72	608·13	40·2	566·94	715·71	47·4
1984-85												
Income Tax	618·44	743·22	47·8	605·21	727·27	46·7	478·08	574·50	36·9	591·95	711·34	45·7
NIC	22·50	27·04	1·7	22·50	27·04	1·7	45·00	54·08	3·5	22·50	27·04	1·7
Total	640·98	770·25	49·5	627·71	754·31	48·5	523·08	628·58	40·4	614·45	738·37	47·4
1985-86												
Income tax	665·47	755·00	47·9	651·05	738·64	46·9	515·61	584·98	37·1	637·25	722·98	45·9
NIC	23·85	27·06	1·7	23·85	27·06	1·7	47·70	54·12	3·4	23·85	27·06	1·7
Total	689·32	782·06	49·6	674·90	765·70	48·6	563·31	639·09	40·5	661·10	750·04	47·6
1986-87												
Income tax	717·47	788·52	48·0	702·24	771·78	47·0	555·04	610·00	37·2	688·04	756·17	46·1
NIC	25·65	28·19	1·7	25·65	28·19	1·7	51·30	56·38	3·4	25·65	28·19	1·7
Total	743·12	816·71	49·7	727·89	799·97	48·7	606·34	666·38	40·6	713·69	784·36	47·8

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	per cent. of gross earnings
1987-88												
Income tax	792·72	838·21	48·5	776·91	821·49	47·5	615·20	650·50	37·6	762·41	126·16	46·6
NIC	26·55	28·07	1·6	26·55	28·07	1·6	53·10	56·15	3·2	26·55	18·06	1·6
Total	819·27	866·28	50·1	803·46	849·57	49·1	668·30	706·65	40·9	788·96	734·24	48·2
1988-89												
Income tax	635·77	635·77	35·7	624·31	624·31	35·1	560·06	560·06	31·5	609·81	609·81	34·3
NIC	27·45	27·45	1·5	27·45	27·45	1·5	54·90	54·90	3·1	27·45	27·45	1·5
Total	663·22	663·22	37·3	651·76	651·76	36·6	614·96	614·96	34·6	637·26	637·26	35·8

1,000 per cent. of average male earnings (£2,541·00 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1988-89 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	618·17	1,313·48	66·6	609·39	1,294·83	65·7	475·02	1,009·32	51·2	601·06	1,277·13	64·8
NIC	7·80	16·57	0·8	7·80	16·57	0·8	15·60	33·15	1·7	7·80	16·57	0·8
Total	625·97	1,330·05	67·5	617·19	1,311·40	66·5	490·62	1,042·46	52·9	608·86	1,293·70	65·6
1979-80												
Income tax	553·18	1,014·83	50·6	545·68	1,001·07	49·9	453·85	832·60	41·5	537·68	986·39	49·2
NIC	8·78	16·11	0·8	8·78	16·11	0·8	17·55	32·20	1·6	8·78	16·11	0·8
Total	561·96	1,030·93	51·4	554·46	1,017·17	50·7	471·40	864·80	43·1	546·46	1,002·50	50·0
1980-81												
Income tax	673·98	1,063·08	51·3	665·09	1,049·06	50·6	561·28	885·32	42·7	656·55	1,035·59	50·0
NIC	11·14	17·57	0·8	11·14	17·57	0·8	22·28	35·14	1·7	11·14	17·57	0·8
Total	685·12	1,080·65	52·1	676·23	1,066·63	51·5	583·56	920·46	44·4	667·69	1,053·16	50·8
1981-82												
Income tax	760·98	1,076·63	52·2	752·09	1,064·05	51·5	646·55	914·74	44·3	742·23	1,050·10	50·9
NIC	15·50	21·93	1·1	15·50	21·93	1·1	31·00	43·86	2·1	15·50	21·93	1·1
Total	776·48	1,098·56	53·2	767·59	1,085·98	52·6	677·55	958·59	46·4	757·73	1,072·03	51·9
1982-83												
Income tax	814·23	1,075·86	51·7	804·07	1,062·44	51·1	684·37	904·28	43·5	793·13	1,047·98	50·4
NIC	19·25	25·44	1·2	19·25	25·44	1·2	38·50	50·87	2·4	19·25	25·44	1·2
Total	833·48	1,101·30	53·0	823·32	1,087·87	52·3	722·87	955·15	45·9	812·38	1,073·42	51·6
1983-84												
Income tax	877·42	1,107·67	51·3	865·77	1,092·96	50·6	730·98	922·80	42·7	853·59	1,077·58	49·9
NIC	21·15	26·70	1·2	21·15	26·70	1·2	42·30	53·40	2·5	21·15	26·70	1·2
Total	898·57	1,134·37	52·5	886·92	1,119·66	51·9	773·28	976·20	45·2	874·74	1,104·28	51·2
1984-85												
Income tax	951·48	1,143·38	51·4	938·21	1,127·43	50·7	794·52	954·76	42·9	924·95	1,111·50	50·0
NIC	22·50	27·04	1·2	22·50	27·04	1·2	45·00	54·08	2·4	22·50	27·04	1·2
Total	973·98	1,170·42	52·6	960·71	1,154·47	51·9	839·52	1,008·84	45·4	947·45	1,138·53	51·2
1985-86												
Income tax	1,022·77	1,160·37	51·5	1,008·35	1,144·01	50·8	855·61	970·72	43·1	994·55	1,128·35	50·1
NIC	23·85	27·06	1·2	23·85	27·06	1·2	47·70	54·12	2·4	23·85	27·06	1·2
Total	1,046·62	1,187·43	52·7	1,032·20	1,171·07	52·0	903·31	1,024·84	45·5	1,018·40	1,155·41	51·3
1986-87												
Income tax	1,101·59	1,210·68	51·6	1,086·36	1,193·94	50·9	922·78	1,014·16	43·2	1,072·16	1,178·33	50·2
NIC	25·65	28·19	1·2	25·65	28·19	1·2	51·30	56·38	2·4	25·65	28·19	1·2
Total	1,127·24	1,238·87	52·8	1,112·01	1,222·13	52·1	974·08	1,070·54	45·6	1,097·81	1,206·52	51·4
1987-88												
Income tax	1,213·20	1,282·82	51·9	1,197·39	1,266·10	51·3	1,024·79	1,083·60	43·9	1,182·89	1,250·77	50·6
NIC	26·55	28·07	1·1	26·55	28·07	1·1	53·10	56·15	2·3	26·55	28·07	1·1
Total	1,239·75	1,310·89	53·1	1,223·94	1,294·18	52·4	1,077·89	1,139·75	46·1	1,209·44	1,278·85	51·8
1988-89												
Income tax	940·69	940·69	37·0	929·23	929·23	36·6	864·98	864·98	34·0	914·73	914·73	36·0
NIC	27·45	27·45	1·1	27·45	27·45	1·1	54·90	54·90	2·2	27·45	27·45	1·1
Total	968·14	968·14	38·1	956·68	956·68	37·6	919·88	919·88	36·2	942·18	942·18	37·1

2,000 per cent. of average male earnings
(£5,082·00 a week in 1988-89)

	Single			*Married no children*			*Married both working*			*Married two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1988-89 prices*	*per cent. of gross earnings*
1978-79												
Income tax	1,388·41	2,950·08	74·8	1,379·63	2,931·42	74·3	1,236·34	2,626·96	66·6	1,371·30	2,913·72	73·9
NIC	7·80	16·57	0·4	7·80	16·57	0·4	15·60	33·15	0·8	7·80	16·57	0·4
Total	1,396·21	2,966·65	75·2	1,387·43	2,948·00	74·8	1,251·94	2,660·11	67·5	1,379·10	2,930·30	74·3
1979-80												
Income tax	1,208·98	2,217·91	55·3	1,201·48	2,204·15	55·0	1,106·35	2,029·63	50·6	1,193·48	2,189·48	54·6
NIC	8·78	16·11	0·4	8·78	16·11	0·4	17·55	32·20	0·8	8·78	16·11	0·4
Total	1,217·76	2,234·02	55·7	1,210·26	2,220·26	55·4	1,123·90	2,061·83	51·4	1,202·26	2,205·58	55·0
1980-81												
Income tax	1,462·38	2,306·64	55·6	1,453·49	2,292·62	55·3	1,347·95	2,126·15	51·3	1,444·95	2,279·15	55·0
NIC	11·14	17·57	0·4	11·14	17·57	0·4	22·28	35·14	0·8	11·14	17·57	0·4
Total	1,473·52	2,324·21	56·1	1,464·63	2,310·19	55·7	1,370·23	2,161·29	52·1	1,456·09	2,296·72	55·4
1981-82												
Income tax	1,636·38	2,315·14	56·1	1,627·49	2,302·57	55·8	1,521·95	2,153·25	52·2	1,617·63	2,288·62	55·4
NIC	15·50	21·93	0·5	15·50	21·93	0·5	31·00	43·86	1·1	15·50	21·93	0·5
Total	1,651·88	2,337·07	56·6	1,642·99	2,324·49	56·3	1,552·95	2,197·11	53·2	1,633·13	2,310·54	56·0
1982-83												
Income tax	1,758·63	2,323·72	55·9	1,748·47	2,310·30	55·5	1,628·45	2,151·71	51·7	1,737·53	2,295·84	55·2
NIC	19·25	25·44	0·6	19·25	25·44	0·6	38·50	50·87	1·2	19·25	25·44	0·6
Total	1,777·88	2,349·16	56·5	1,767·72	2,335·73	56·2	1,666·95	2,202·58	53·0	1,756·78	2,321·28	55·8
1983-84												
Income tax	1,903·42	2,402·90	55·7	1,891·77	2,388·20	55·3	1,754·85	2,215·35	51·3	1,879·59	2,372·82	55·0
NIC	21·15	26·70	0·6	21·15	26·70	0·6	42·30	53·40	1·2	21·15	26·70	0·6
Total	1,924·57	2,429·60	56·3	1,912·92	2,414·90	55·9	1,797·15	2,268·75	52·5	1,900·74	2,399·52	55·6
1984-85												
Income tax	2,061·48	2,477·25	55·7	2,048·21	2,461·30	55·4	1,902·96	2,286·75	51·4	2,034·95	2,445·36	55·0
NIC	22·50	27·04	0·6	22·50	27·04	0·6	45·00	54·08	1·2	22·50	27·04	0·6
Total	2,083·98	2,504·28	56·3	2,070·71	2,488·34	56·0	1,947·96	2,340·83	52·6	2,057·45	2,472·40	55·6
1985-86												
Income tax	2,213·77	2,511·60	55·8	2,199·35	2,495·24	55·4	2,045·54	2,320·73	51·5	2,185·55	2,479·58	55·1
NIC	23·85	27·06	0·6	23·85	27·06	0·6	47·70	54·12	1·2	23·85	27·06	0·6
Total	2,237·62	2,538·66	56·4	2,223·20	2,522·30	56·0	2,093·24	2,374·85	52·7	2,209·40	2,506·64	55·7
1986-87												
Income tax	2,381·99	2,617·87	55·8	2,366·76	2,601·13	55·5	2,203·18	2,421·35	51·6	2,352·56	2,585·52	55·1
NIC	25·65	28·19	0·6	25·65	28·19	0·6	51·30	56·38	1·2	25·65	28·19	0·6
Total	2,407·64	2,646·06	56·4	2,392·41	2,629·32	56·1	2,254·48	2,477·73	52·8	2,378·21	2,613·71	55·7
1987-88												
Income tax	2,614·80	2,764·85	56·0	2,598·99	2,748·14	55·6	2,426·39	2,565·63	51·9	2,584·49	2,732·80	55·3
NIC	26·55	28·07	0·6	26·55	28·07	0·6	53·10	56·15	1·1	26·55	28·07	0·6
Total	2,641·35	2,792·93	56·5	2,625·54	2,776·21	56·2	2,479·49	2,621·78	53·1	2,611·04	2,760·88	55·9
1988-89												
Income tax	1,957·09	1,957·09	38·5	1,945·63	1,945·63	38·3	1,881·38	1,881·38	37·0	1,931·13	1,931·13	38·0
NIC	27·45	27·45	0·5	27·45	27·45	0·5	54·90	54·90	1·1	27·45	27·45	0·5
Total	1,984·54	1,984·54	39·1	1,973·08	1,973·08	38·8	1,936·28	1,936·28	38·1	1,958·58	1,958·58	38·5

Notes to tables

Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the tax units have no other tax reliefs apart from the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The levels of average earnings in each year are given below:

	£ per week
1978-79	92·80
1979-80	109·30
1980-81	131·40
1981-82	145·90
1982-83	157·40
1983-84	171·00
1984-85	185·00
1985-86	198·50
1986-87	213·40
1987-88	233·60
1988-89	254·10

[1] Assuming growth of 8¼ per cent. on 1987-88.

3. The two earner married couple is assumed to have joint earnings of the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that the joint earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

4. For the married couple with two children, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax. For this purpose, financial year averages are used for child benefit.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes are derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the income range for which figures are shown. There are also quite wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and composition and, because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from different family expenditure surveys.

Departmental Spending

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing the public spending outturn for each Government Department and total in *(a)* each year from 1978-79 until 1989-90 plans expressed in constant 1988 prices, *(b)* the annual percentage change for each Department and the total and *(c)* the overall percentage change for each Department and the total.

Mr. Major: A breakdown of the public expenditure planning total by Department for the years 1978-79 and 1983-84 to 1989-90 in real terms (base year 1987-88), from which percentage changes can be derived, was given in table 1.10 of the 1988 Autumn Statement. Corresponding figures for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83 will appear in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper (table 21.4.3) which is due to be published towards the end of the month.

Share Issues

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has regarding the amount of new capital raised through share issues by companies quoted on the London stock exchange in each of the last five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The value of net issues of share capital by United Kingdom listed public companies for the period 1984-88 are given in the table:

	£ million
1984	1,440
1985	4,625
1986	7,816
1987	15,432
1988	5,877

These figures relate to new money raised in sterling on the main United Kingdom stock market by issues of ordinary and preference shares. Small amounts were also raised on this market by companies registered abroad. The figures do not include privatisations that did not raise new money for the company.

Amounts raised by companies on the unlisted securities market, which was launched by the stock exchange in November 1980, were as follows:

	£ million
1984	137
1985	170
1986	301
1987	958
1988	620

More money has been raised during 1984-88 than in any previous five-year period.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many oral parliamentary questions he has answered by written reply because the question was not reached at Question Time, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: In 1988, a total of 914 oral questions were tabled to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of which 787 received a written reply. These figures do not include oral questions which were subsequently withdrawn, unstarred or transferred to other Departments.

Local and National Expenditure

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing expenditure by function for *(a)* housing, *(b)* other environmental services, *(c)* education and science, *(d)* health and personal social services and *(e)* social security, broken down into expenditure accounted for by (i) local authorities and (ii) central Government for each year between 1968-69 and 1990-91 in both cash and real terms.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Detailed information on public expenditure by function and Department was given in the introductory tables to the departmental chapters in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" Cm 288-II. These tables also differentiated between expenditure accounted for by local authorities and central Government. Information on trends in cash and real terms since 1978-79 were given in the historical trends section of Cm 288-I, which also gave the GDP deflators from which other real terms figures can be calculated. Similar information updated to take account of the 1988 public expenditure survey will appear in the departmental booklets and chapter 21 of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper due to be published in January.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 11 January 1989

ENVIRONMENT

River Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 20 per cent. of water authorities sewage treatment works in England and Wales where poor performance has given rise to recent deterioration in river quality.

Mr. Moynihan: Water authority returns detailing those sewage treatment works which in 1987 failed to comply with discharge consent conditions are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions there have been under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in respect of alleged river pollution since the implementation of the Act; and if he will list such prosecutions in date order.

Mr. Moynihan: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 8 December at col. *276*.

Sewage

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the major programmes of investment applicable to sewage works in coastal towns to bring their works up to standard; and in each case what provision there is for primary and secondary sewage treatment.

Mr. Moynihan: The detailed programmes of investment for upgrading all sewage treatment works are still being developed by individual authorities in discussion with my Department. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on December 7 to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) by my hon. Friend the Minister for Water and Planning at column *199*.

Water Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the statutory standard for water in order to safeguard the public from the hazards of polluted rivers, lakes and reservoirs, in view of their increasing use for inland water sports and recreation.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to his questions on Tuesday 10 January at columns *504-505*.

Water Companies (Asset Values)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact on the asset values of water companies of the failure of copper pipes due to water corrosion caused by the non-lime retaining waters supplied *(a)* in Nottingham and *(b)* in England.

Mr. Moynihan: None. Water authority mains are unlikely to be affected.

Football

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any estimates of those attending the following numbers of Football League matches in a season *(a)* one to 10, *(b)* 11 to 20, *(c)* 21 to 30, *(d)* 31 to 40 and *(e)* more than 40.

Mr. Moynihan: No.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions there will be under the football membership scheme for football fans who support more than one team.

Mr. Moynihan: It will be for the body appointed to run the scheme to consider the way in which the scheme will work in detail and submit proposals to the Secretary of State for approval. The report of the working party I chaired recommended that members of the scheme should be able to attend any designated match.

Towpaths

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the use of canal towpaths for horse-riding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The management of towpaths is the responsibility of their owners. Most canal towpaths are owned by the British Waterways Board, whose byelaws require permission to be obtained for horse riding. The board's policy is to permit horse riding only where it would be compatible with other uses.

Water Authority Chairmen

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to change any of the water authority chairmen.

Mr. Moynihan: No.

Housing Action Trust (Leeds)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the report prepared for him by PIEDA consultants on the proposed housing action trust in Leeds, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have not yet received the report from the consultants studying the area proposed for a housing action trust in Leeds.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy in deciding whether to designate Halton Moor estate, Leeds, as part of a housing action trust, to take into account the report prepared by local tenants, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Trippier: We shall take account of all local views in deciding whether to establish individual HATs. In

particular, the Secretary of State may not make an order designating a HAT area unless a majority of tenants approve the proposal in a ballot.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 21 December, *Official Report*, column *268*, if he will list for each local authority its share of the accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 at 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Ridley: It is not possible to estimate what grant individual authorities would have received in each of the last 10 years had the total of rate support grant been higher without knowing what decisions would have been made by the Government about the factors which affect the distribution of grant and by authorities about their level of spending.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show for each local authority the rate support grant paid in each year since 1978-79, expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms at 1988-89 prices; and what percentage of the council's total expenditure in each year this represented.

Mr. Ridley: The information will be placed in the House of Commons Library today.

Water

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations have been made by his Department to the European Commission regarding the incident at Lowermoor water treatment works on 6 July 1988;

(2) what representations have been made by his Department to the World Health Organisation regarding the incident at Lowermoor water treatment works on 6 July 1988.

Mr. Ridley: None.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action has been taken by his Department subsequent to his meeting with the chairman of the Lowermoor incident liaison group on 21 December.

Mr. Ridley: No action has been taken by my Department subsequent to the meeting of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health with the chairman of the Lowermoor incident liaison group and the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) on 21 December. I am satisfied that the undertakings which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health gave in relation to the local health concerns will meet the principal worries of people in the Camelford area.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what correspondence he has received from the European Commission in connection with European law and the provisions in the Water Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: A copy of the Water Bill has been sent to the European Commission. If the Commission raises any points we shall consider them.

Grant-related Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total and *(b)* the percentage year-on-year change in the grant-related expenditure of (i) the Inner London Education Authority and (ii) the Metropolitan police, in each year from 1981-82.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as shown in the following table:

	Total GRE (£ million)		*Change in GRE on previous year (per cent.)*	
	ILEA	*Metropolitan police*	*ILEA*	*Metropolitan police*
1981-82	468·477	273·605	—	—
1982-83	509·273	327·191	8·7	19·6
1983-84	513·327	348·304	0·8	6·5
1984-85	532·430	366·679	3·7	5·3
1985-86	520·770	388·948	−2·2	6·1
1986-87	548·153	421·270	5·3	8·3
1987-88	581·161	459·871	6·0	9·2
1988-89	630·134	497·553	8·4	8·2
1988-89[1]	582·195	497·553	—	—
1989-90	629·834	545·443	8·2	9·6

[1] Adjustment.

Note: In the table above an adjusted 1988-89 GRE is shown for ILEA. The adjustment reflects the transfer of higher education establishments to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council from 1 April 1989.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the percentage change in grant-related expenditure for each local authority between 1987-88 and 1988-89, ranked from biggest increase to biggest decrease.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as shown in the following table:

Percentage changes in GRE between 1987-88 RSG second supplementary report and 1988-89 RSG supplementary report

	Percentage change in GRE
East Lindsey	28·5
Northumbria Police Authority	14·4
Runnymede	14·1
South Yorkshire Police Authority	13·8
West Yorkshire Police Authority	13·0
Middlesbrough	12·4
West Midlands Police Authority	11·9
Merseyside Police Authority	11·9
Greater Manchester Police Authority	11·9
Isle of Wight	9·9
Berkshire	9·8
Glanford	9·6
Harrow	9·6
Kingston-upon-Thames	9·5
East Sussex	9·4
West Sussex	9·3
Buckinghamshire	9·3
Northamptonshire	9·3
Redbridge	9·2
Sutton	9·2
Milton Keynes	9·2
Barnet	9·0
Cambridgeshire	9·0
Hillingdon	8·9
Enfield	8·9
Suffolk	8·9
Bradford	8·9
Leicestershire	8·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	8·8

	Percentage change in GRE
Rotherham	8·7
Cornwall	8·7
Wellingborough	8·6
Ealing	8·5
Hampshire	8·5
Bedfordshire	8·5
Surrey	8·4
Avon	8·4
ILEA	8·4
Lincolnshire	8·4
Knowsley	8·4
Dorset	8·4
City of London	8·4
Bexley	8·4
Somerset	8·3
North Yorkshire	8·3
Wiltshire	8·3
Gloucestershire	8·2
Merton	8·2
Metropolitan Police	8·2
Sunderland	8·2
Essex	8·2
Kirklees	8·1
Shropshire	8·1
Haringey	8·1
Oldham	8·1
Norfolk	8·1
Oxfordshire	8·0
Hastings	8·0
Bromley	8·0
Coventry	8·0
Calderdale	8·0
Cheshire	7·9
North Tyneside	7·9
Derbyshire	7·9
South Tyneside	7·9
Ellesmere Port and Neston	7·8
North Devon	7·8
Gateshead	7·8
Nottinghamshire	7·7
Burnley	7·7
Leeds	7·7
Hammersmith and Fulham	7·7
Birmingham	7·7
Lancashire	7·6
Sandwell	7·5
Kent	7·5
Solihull	7·5
Wirral	7·5
Devon	7·5
Thurrock	7·5
Sefton	7·5
Doncaster	7·4
Purbeck	7·3
Wakefield	7·3
Dudley	7·3
Durham	7·3
Cleveland	7·3
Wigan	7·2
Scarborough	7·2
Penwith	7·2
Waltham Forest	7·2
Hertfordshire	7·2
Teignbridge	7·2
Rochdale	7·2
Havant	7·1
Warwickshire	7·1
Hounslow	7·1
Bolton	7·1
Humberside	7·1
St. Helens	7·1
Bournemouth	7·1
Weymouth and Portland	7·1
Staffordshire	7·0
Wolverhampton	7·0
Walsall	7·0

	Percentage change in GRE
Halton	7·0
Northumberland	6·9
New Forest	6·9
Cumbria	6·8
Poole	6·8
Trafford	6·8
South Hams	6·8
Lancaster	6·8
Croydon	6·8
Lambeth	6·8
Barking and Dagenham	6·8
Isles of Scilly	6·8
Bury	6·7
Plymouth	6·7
Hereford and Worcester	6·6
Bracknell	6·5
Nottingham	6·5
Blackpool	6·5
Kensington and Chelsea	6·5
Richmond-upon-Thames	6·4
Barnsley	6·4
Brent	6·4
Camden	6·3
Horsham	6·3
Peterborough	6·3
Suffolk Coastal	6·2
Torbay	6·2
Hartlepool	6·2
Woking	6·2
Sheffield	6·1
Southampton	6·1
Pendle	6·1
Stockton-on-Tees	6·0
Havering	6·0
Wokingham	6·0
Adur	6·0
West Dorset	6·0
Huntingdonshire	5·9
Waveney	5·9
Barrow in Furness	5·9
Preston	5·9
Worthing	5·9
Bristol	5·8
Kingston upon Hull	5·8
Woodspring	5·8
Tyne and Wear Fire and CD Authority	5·7
West Somerset	5·7
Slough	5·7
North Dorset	5·6
Restormel	5·6
Salford	5·5
Corby	5·5
Sedgemoor	5·5
Wyre	5·5
Thamesdown	5·5
Tameside	5·5
Hove	5·5
Redditich	5·4
Kerrier	5·4
North Norfolk	5·3
Newham	5·3
Scunthorpe	5·3
Oxford	5·3
Stoke-on-Trent	5·3
Test Valley	5·2
Tandridge	5·2
Chesterfield	5·2
Reigate and Banstead	5·2
Tamworth	5·1
Lewisham	5·1
Northavon	5·1
Southend-on-Sea	5·1
South Yorkshire Fire & CD Authority	5·1
Torridge	5·1
Mid Devon	5·1
London Fire & CD Authority	5·1

	Percentage change in GRE
Stockport	5·1
Norwich	5·0
Gillingham	5·0
Rother	4·9
East Hertfordshire	4·9
Tendring	4·9
South Wight	4·8
Cheltenham	4·8
Liverpool	4·8
Shepway	4·8
Warrington	4·7
Southwark	4·7
Manchester	4·7
Brentwood	4·7
Dover	4·7
Wrekin	4·7
Sedgefield	4·7
Worcester	4·7
Portsmouth	4·7
North Bedfordshire	4·6
Copeland	4·6
Eastleigh	4·6
Carrick	4·6
Exeter	4·6
Rochester upon Medway	4·5
Carlisle	4·5
Basingstoke and Deane	4·5
Wandsworth	4·5
East Staffordshire	4·5
Malvern Hills	4·5
West Lancashire	4·5
South Bedfordshire	4·4
South Staffordshire	4·4
North Cornwall	4·4
Mid Bedfordshire	4·4
Elmbridge	4·4
Hereford	4·3
Wear Valley	4·3
Kettering	4·3
Colchester	4·3
Dartford	4·3
Crawley	4·3
Broxtowe	4·3
Guildford	4·3
Gloucester	4·3
Kingswood	4·2
Selby	4·2
Derwentside	4·2
Derby	4·2
Swale	4·2
South Yorkshire Transport Authority	4·2
Leicester	4·2
Canterbury	4·1
Durham	4·1
Fenland	4·1
South Kesteven	4·1
Fareham	4·1
Christchurch	4·0
East Hampshire	4·0
Winchester	4·0
Fylde	4·0
Eden	4·0
Cherwell	4·0
West Devon	4·0
Rushcliffe	4·0
Greater Manchester Transport Authority	3·9
Aylesbury Vale	3·9
York	3·9
Blyth Valley	3·9
West Oxfordshire	3·9
Stevenage	3·9
Chester	3·9
Eastbourne	3·8
West Midlands Fire and CD Authority	3·8
Wycombe	3·8
Caradon	3·8

	Percentage change in GRE
Bath	3·8
Taunton Deane	3·8
Shrewsbury and Atcham	3·8
Richmondshire	3·8
Wansbeck	3·8
South Shropshire	3·7
Warwick	3·7
Erewash	3·7
South Herefordshire	3·7
Arun	3·7
East Northamptonshire	3·7
St. Edmundsbury	3·7
Chorley	3·7
Wealden	3·7
Medina	3·6
Stroud	3·6
West Lindsey	3·6
Nuneaton and Bedworth	3·6
Newbury	3·6
West Yorkshire Fire and CD Authority	3·6
Broxbourne	3·5
Broadland	3·5
Melton	3·5
Congleton	3·5
Thanet	3·4
Great Yarmouth	3·4
Mendip	3·4
Holderness	3·4
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	3·4
Forest of Dean	3·4
Cambridge	3·4
East Dorset	3·4
East Yorkshire	3·3
North Kesteven	3·3
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3·3
Ashfield	3·3
Harlow	3·3
Hart	3·2
East Devon	3·2
Gedling	3·2
Islington	3·2
Wychavon	3·2
Chichester	3·2
Mole Valley	3·2
Amber Valley	3·1
Newark and Sherwood	3·1
Epsom and Ewell	3·1
Mid Sussex	3·1
Daventry	3·1
West Midlands Transport Authority	3·1
Beverley	3·1
Ribble Valley	3·0
South Cambridgeshire	3·0
Vale Royal	3·0
Tonbridge and Malling	3·0
South Somerset	3·0
Cotswold	3·0
Greater Manchester Fire & CD Authority	3·0
Watford	3·0
Stratford on Avon	2·9
South Northamptonshire	2·9
Luton	2·9
Blackburn	2·9
Dacorum	2·8
Tewkesbury	2·8
Leominster	2·8
South Lakeland	2·8
Teesdale	2·8
Chelmsford	2·8
Bassetlaw	2·8
Harrogate	2·8
Wyre Forest	2·8
Craven	2·8
Ryedale	2·8
Ipswich	2·8
Blaby	2·7

	Percentage change in GRE
Cannock Chase	2·7
East Cambridgeshire	2·7
Waverley	2·6
Sevenoaks	2·6
Crewe and Nantwich	2·6
Boston	2·6
Rochford	2·6
Rugby	2·6
Maldon	2·6
Stafford	2·6
High Peak	2·6
Maidstone	2·6
Hertsmere	2·5
Tower Hamlets	2·5
South Bucks	2·5
Rossendale	2·5
Breckland	2·5
Gosport	2·5
Epping Forest	2·5
Boothferry	2·4
Surrey Heath	2·4
Lichfield	2·4
Gravesham	2·3
Tunbridge Wells	2·3
Hyndburn	2·3
Vale of White Horse	2·2
Bromsgrove	2·2
Babergh	2·2
Merseyside Fire and CD Authority	2·2
Chiltern	2·1
St. Albans	2·1
West Wiltshire	2·1
Welwyn Hatfield	2·1
Bridgnorth	2·0
Allerdale	2·0
Spelthorne	2·0
Macclesfield	2·0
Oswestry	2·0
Lincoln	2·0
Rushmoor	1·9
South Ribble	1·9
Darlington	1·9
Castle Point	1·9
Charnwood	1·9
North Warwickshire	1·8
Windsor and Maidenhead	1·8
Kennet	1·8
Great Grimsby	1·7
Hinckley and Bosworth	1·6
South Derbyshire	1·6
Westminster	1·6
North Hertfordshire	1·6
North Wiltshire	1·5
Reading	1·5
Oadby and Wigston	1·4
Salisbury	1·4
Three Rivers	1·4
Cleethorpes	1·3
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1·3
South Oxfordshire	1·3
Forest Heath	1·2
Staffordshire Moorlands	1·1
Uttlesford	1·0
Braintree	1·0
South Holland	1·0
Hambledon	0·9
Alnwick	0·9
South Norfolk	0·8
North East Derbyshire	0·7
Mid Suffolk	0·6
North Shropshire	0·4
Harborough	0·4
North West Leicestershire	0·3
Bolsover	0·3
Rutland	0·2
Brighton	0·2
Tynedale	−0·1
Basildon	−0·1
Greenwich	−0·3
Lewes	−0·3
Hackney	−0·4
Tyne and Wear Transport Authority	−0·7
Castle Morpeth	−0·7
Derbyshire Dales	−0·9
Merseyside Transport Authority	−0·9
Ashford	−1·1
Mansfield	−1·7
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	−1·8
Wansdyke	−2·6
Chester-le-Street	−3·4
Northampton	−6·6
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	−6·7
Easington	−26·8

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in descending order using their 1988-89 budgets all English local authorities on the basis of the percentage above or below their grant-related expenditure assessments for 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: The information based on the relevant amounts determined in accordance with the Rate Support Grants Act 1988 is as shown in the table:

1988-89 Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report

	Relevant amount above or below GRE (per cent.)
Brentwood	276·7
Harlow	175·0
Crawley	108·7
Thurrock	100·5
City of London	99·6
Guildford	98·0
North Warwickshire	97·7
Sedgefield	89·5
Wear Valley	83·8
Derwentside	76·3
South Yorkshire Transport Authority	74·2
Thamesdown	69·1
Bassetlaw	67·2
ILEA	63·1
Basildon	62·9
Rossendale	61·3
Welwyn Hatfield	60·6
Burnley	60·1
Wansbeck	60·0
Stevenage	59·3
Blyth Valley	58·9
Hart	57·9
North East Derbyshire	56·5
Darlington	55·9
Scunthorpe	55·6
Bolsover	53·7
Durham	51·6
Daventry	49·1
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	48·7
Harrogate	48·6
Adur	48·0
Milton Keynes	46·9
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	45·3
Nuneaton and Bedworth	44·0
Wokingham	43·9
Selby	40·0
Chester-le-Street	39·7
Greenwich	39·2
Pendle	39·0
West Yorkshire Fire and CD Authority	37·4

	Relevant amount above or below GRE (per cent.)
South Bedfordshire	37·4
Wyre Forest	37·4
Mansfield	36·4
Redditch	36·0
Hyndburn	35·3
Reigate and Banstead	35·1
Tynedale	34·6
East Yorkshire	34·3
Oxford	34·3
Easington	32·5
Ribble Valley	32·0
Camden	30·2
Lewisham	29·2
Crewe and Nantwich	27·9
Merseyside Transport Authority	27·7
Cleethorpes	27·4
Hartlepool	27·3
Three Rivers	26·8
Shepway	26·8
Ipswich	26·5
Norwich	26·4
Wrekin	26·1
High Peak	25·7
West Lindsey	25·6
Suffolk Coastal	25·5
St. Albans	25·5
North West Leicestershire	25·5
Blackburn	25·2
Epsom and Ewell	25·2
Carlisle	24·5
Bristol	23·4
South Yorkshire Fire and CD Authority	23·2
Preston	22·8
Boothferry	22·3
Greater Manchester Fire and CD Authority	22·1
Tyne and Wear Fire and CD Authority	21·9
North Wiltshire	21·7
Copeland	21·4
Chester	21·2
Peterborough	21·2
Tower Hamlets	20·9
East Dorset	20·0
Hackney	19·5
Hertsmere	18·9
Leicester	18·7
South Wight	18·5
Wychavon	17·4
Derbyshire Dales	17·3
Chesterfield	17·2
West Lancashire	16·4
Great Yarmouth	16·3
Castle Point	15·9
Dartford	15·7
Sevenoaks	15·5
Wealden	15·5
Mid Suffolk	15·3
Malvern Hills	15·1
East Hampshire	15·1
Ashford	14·7
Beverley	14·7
Castle Morpeth	14·6
New Forest	14·5
Warrington	14·5
Stockton-on-Tees	14·5
Congleton	14·4
South Ribble	14·3
Harborough	14·2
Vale Royal	14·1
Swale	13·8
Epping Forest	13·8
Scarborough	13·8
North Kesteven	13·7
South Hams	13·6
Chorley	13·5

	Relevant amount above or below GRE (per cent.)
Stratford on Avon	13·4
Teignbridge	13·4
Ashfield	13·3
Fareham	13·3
Craven	13·2
Staffordshire Moorlands	13·2
Tonbridge and Malling	13·2
Southwark	13·2
Spelthorne	13·0
Halton	13·0
North Hertfordshire	12·8
Newark and Sherwood	12·7
Newcastle-under-Lyme	12·6
Torridge	12·6
Melton	12·6
Winchester	12·5
Bath	12·5
Barrow in Furness	12·5
Sedgemoor	12·3
Tunbridge Wells	12·3
Blackpool	12·2
Middlesbrough	12·1
Thanet	11·8
Watford	11·7
London Fire & CD Authority	11·6
Brent	11·4
Oswestry	11·4
Gravesham	11·4
Rother	11·3
Great Grimsby	11·2
Stoke-on-Trent	11·2
Richmondshire	11·2
Cannock Chase	11·1
Arun	11·1
Calderdale	11·0
Alnwick	10·9
Canterbury	10·9
Windsor and Maidenhead	10·6
Kingston upon Hull	10·5
Carrick	10·4
South Lakeland	10·4
Northavon	10·3
Worcester	10·2
Lewes	10·2
East Lindsey	10·2
North Devon	10·1
Wigan	10·1
Tameside	10·0
Richmond-upon-Thames	10·0
Stroud	9·9
Northampton	9·9
Dover	9·9
North Tyneside	9·9
Rotherham	9·9
Doncaster	9·8
Brighton	9·8
Sheffield	9·8
Waverley	9·7
Barnsley	9·7
Oxfordshire	9·5
Cumbria	9·5
Derbyshire	9·5
Wakefield	9·4
Lambeth	9·4
Rochdale	9·4
Walsall	9·3
Kirklees	9·3
Haringey	9·1
Newcastle upon Tyne	9·1
Forest of Dean	9·1
Cleveland	9·0
West Midlands Fire and CD Authority	9·0
South Bucks	8·9
Lancaster	8·9

	Relevant amount above or below GRE (per cent.)
Torbay	8·8
Holderness	8·8
Woodspring	8·8
Salford	8·8
Manchester	8·7
Greater Manchester Transport Authority	8·7
Sunderland	8·7
Avon	8·6
Glanford	8·5
Gateshead	8·3
Liverpool	8·3
Chelmsford	8·3
Lincoln	8·3
South Tyneside	8·2
Reading	8·2
Humberside	8·2
St. Helens	8·1
Bedfordshire	8·0
Fylde	8·0
Waltham Forest	8·0
South Derbyshire	8·0
Merseyside Police Authority	7·8
West Yorkshire Police Authority	7·8
Knowsley	7·8
Wyre	7·8
Northumbria Police Authority	7·7
Sandwell	7·7
Allerdale	7·7
Hertfordshire	7·6
Hammersmith and Fulham	7·6
Islington	7·5
Rushmoor	7·5
Mid Devon	7·5
South Kesteven	7·5
Chiltern	7·5
Wirral	7·4
Merseyside Fire and CD Authority	7·4
Newham	7·3
North Bedfordshire	7·3
Mid Sussex	7·2
Northumberland	7·2
Enfield	7·2
Hove	7·1
Penwith	7·1
Caradon	6·9
Nottinghamshire	6·8
Bradford	6·7
Forest Heath	6·7
Portsmouth	6·6
Horsham	6·6
Warwick	6·6
Leominster	6·6
Tyne and Wear Transport Authority	6·4
Derby	6·4
Coventry	6·1
Babergh	6·0
Hillingdon	6·0
Bury	5·9
Nottingham	5·9
Shrewsbury and Atcham	5·5
West Wiltshire	5·5
North Cornwall	5·2
West Devon	5·1
Dudley	5·1
Hounslow	5·1
Hastings	5·0
Kerrier	5·0
Barking and Dagenham	4·9
Hambleton	4·8
Gedling	4·7
Buckinghamshire	4·6
Dacorum	4·6
Waveney	4·6
Wolverhampton	4·5
Sutton	4·4
Kettering	4·2
Barnet	4·2
West Midlands Police Authority	4·1
Erewash	4·1
Ealing	4·0
Isle of Wight	4·0
Essex	3·9
Broxtowe	3·9
East Hertfordshire	3·8
Stafford	3·8
Durham	3·7
Kingston-upon-Thames	3·6
Wiltshire	3·6
Oadby and Wigston	3·6
Rushcliffe	3·6
Warwickshire	3·5
Maidstone	3·5
Cheshire	3·4
Northamptonshire	3·3
Medina	3·3
Mid Bedfordshire	3·2
Eastbourne	3·1
Harrow	3·1
Southend-on-Sea	3·0
Amber Valley	3·0
Teesdale	2·9
Lancashire	2·8
Berwick-upon-Tweed	2·8
North Shropshire	2·7
Greater Manchester Police Authority	2·6
Bolton	2·4
Tendring	2·3
South Yorkshire Police Authority	2·3
Wycombe	2·3
Uttlesford	2·3
Southampton	2·2
Somerset	2·2
Cambridgeshire	2·2
Worthing	1·9
Oldham	1·9
Birmingham	1·8
Stockport	1·7
Sefton	1·6
Gloucestershire	1·6
Corby	1·5
Maldon	1·4
Leicestershire	1·0
Eastleigh	1·0
Rugby	·6
North Yorkshire	·6
Surrey	·5
Tandridge	·5
Staffordshire	·5
Gloucester	·3
Boston	·3
Leeds	·1
Macclesfield	·1
Bournemouth	·1
Rochford	·1
Gillingham	·1
Havering	−·0
Broxbourne	−·1
Metropolitan Police	−·1
Restormel	−·2
West Midlands Transport Authority	−·2
Ryedale	−·4
Broadland	−·6
South Holland	−0·8
Luton	−1·0
Eden	−1·1
Test Valley	−1·2
West Somerset	−1·2
Croydon	−1·2

	Relevant amount above or below GRE (per cent.)
East Staffordshire	−1·3
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	−1·5
Cambridge	−1·7
Devon	−1·7
Suffolk	−2·1
Shropshire	−2·1
Lincolnshire	−2·1
East Sussex	−2·2
Cornwall	−2·3
Christchurch	−2·4
Trafford	−2·4
Bexley	−2·5
Weymouth and Portland	−2·5
South Norfolk	−2·6
Berkshire	−2·6
Hampshire	−2·7
East Devon	−3·0
South Somerset	−3·1
Gosport	−4·0
Wellingborough	−4·0
Kennet	−4·1
Solihull	−4·1
Norfolk	−4·2
Chichester	−4·2
Braintree	−4·3
Bromley	−4·4
Hereford and Worcester	−5·0
West Sussex	−5·1
Havant	−5·1
South Shropshire	−5·2
Kent	−5·2
Wandsworth	−5·2
Lichfield	−5·6
Merton	−5·9
Cheltenham	−5·9
Plymouth	−6·0
Taunton Deane	−6·3
Dorset	−6·3
Isles of Scilly	−6·4
Tamworth	−6·4
North Norfolk	−6·5
Redbridge	−6·9
Westminster	−7·1
Cotswold	−7·2
Slough	−7·3
Poole	−8·1
Breckland	−10·1
Ellesmere Port and Neston	−10·3
Fenland	−10·3
Colchester	−10·4
Bromsgrove	−11·1
Exeter	−11·5
Mendip	−11·6
Kingswood	−12·1
South Staffordshire	−12·2
West Oxfordshire	−12·6
York	−13·1
West Dorset	−13·1
Salisbury	−13·6
Basingstoke and Deane	−13·6
Bridgnorth	−13·8
Blaby	−14·2
South Northamptonshire	−14·5
Hereford	−14·5
Charnwood	−14·8
Kensington and Chelsea	−15·2
North Dorset	−15·3
St. Edmundsbury	−15·6
Newbury	−16·8
Cherwell	−17·8
South Herefordshire	−18·0
Rochester upon Medway	−18·2
Bracknell	−19·3
South Oxfordshire	−19·8
Huntingdonshire	−20·4
Hinckley and Bosworth	−20·6
Rutland	−21·0
Purbeck	−21·7
Aylesbury Vale	−21·9
Tewkesbury	−24·0
Elmbridge	−25·9
Surrey Heath	−26·2
Wansdyke	−26·8
East Northamptonshire	−27·7
Vale of White Horse	−35·5
East Cambridgeshire	−36·6
Woking	45·0
Mole Valley	−58·7
South Cambridgeshire	−58·7
Runnymede	−66·4

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each authority selected for rate limitation in 1988-89 the percentage increase or decrease in its 1988-89 budgeted total expenditure compared with its original 1987-88 budget.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

Total expenditure[1]

	Budget 1987-88 £ million	Budget 1988-89 £ million	Change percentage
Manchester	316·526	316·568	0·0
Liverpool	306·116	303·755	−0·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	156·784	161·505	3·0
Camden	152·981	139·463	−8·8
Greenwich	96·331	95·089	−1·3
Hackney	145·859	130·978	−10·2
Lambeth	152·373	152·486	0·1
Lewisham	133·101	122·045	−8·3
Southwark	135·690	132·723	−2·2
Tower Hamlets	124·033	126·033	1·6
Ealing	175·762	175·050	−0·4
Haringey	154·455	154·364	−0·1
Waltham Forest	152·369	142·031	−6·8
Middlesbrough	17·569	17·570	0·0
Basildon	16·911	12·968	−23·3
Kingston upon Hull	31·759	28·500	−10·3
Thamesdown	14·199	15·422	8·6

[1] Latest available information on budget returns made by authorities.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish the total rate rise in poundage and percentage terms, at ratepayer level, in every local authority in England between 1981-82 and 1987-88, whole period, ranked from biggest increase to smallest increase, by class;

(2) if he will publish the overall percentage change in the non-domestic rate poundage in each rating authority in England between 1981-82 and 1988-89, showing the percentage increase which would have occurred in each if the non-domestic rate poundage had increased in line with the retail price index over this period, showing the difference between the two percentages for each authority;

(3) if he will list in descending order all English local authorities on the basis of the percentage change in their

local rate or precept from 1981-82 to 1988-89, showing in each case the percentage change in current expenditure in the same period.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed the information in the Library.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the overall average unrebated domestic rate bill paid by householders in *(a)* England and *(b)* England and Wales in each year since 1966-67.

Mr. Ridley: The estimated figures are as follows:

Average (unrebated) domestic rate bills[1]

	England £	*England and Wales* £
1966-67	41	40
1967-68	41	41
1968-69	42	42
1969-70	44	44
1970-71	47	46
1971-72	54	53
1972-73	61	60
1973-74	66	66
1974-75[2]	77	74
1975-76	94	92
1976-77	103	100
1977-78	119	116
1978-79	131	128
1979-80	155	152
1980-81	199	195
1981-82	245	239
1982-83	282	276
1983-84	303	296
1984-85	323	316
1985-86	351	344
1986-87	401	392
1987-88	429	420
1988-89[3]	468	459

[1] Average unrebated rate bills are derived from average domestic rateable values per hereditament and the average domestic rate poundages levied by local authorities.

[2] Figures up to 1973-74 are not comparable with those for 1974-75 and later years. This is due to the change of local authorities' responsibilities in 1974, in particular the transfer of water and sewerage services from local authorities to water authorities.

[3] The figures for 1988-89 are provisional.

Thoresby Hall

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken in respect of the proposed break-up and disposal of the contents of Thoresby hall, Nottinghamshire; what discussions he has had with English Heritage and British Coal about the future of the hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Disposal of the contents of any listed building is a private matter for their owners. I have ensured that British Coal and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy are aware of the representations made by English Heritage and others about the future of the hall. Any applications for listed building consent for works to alter or demolish this grade I listed building would need to be referred to my Department.

Porter *v.* Honey

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement of the implications for policy on estate agents boards of the judgment delivered in the House of Lords on 1 December in the case of Porter *v.* Honey.

Mr. Howard: Their Lordships were invited to answer the following certified question:

"If an estate agent, instructed to sell or let a residential property, displays a board outside the property no other being at that time displayed, does he commit an offence if another agent (to his knowledge or without it) thereafter displays a second?"

Their answer was unanimously in the negative and the appeal by Mr. A. H. Porter, against judgment given in the Divisional Court on 30 March, was allowed.

I welcome this judgment and their Lordships' view, expressed by Lord Griffiths, that they were,

"unable to impute to the Secretary of State or Parliament the intention that an estate agent in the position of the appellant should be held guilty of a criminal offence".

I hope that all estate agents and vendors will observe the rule that only one advertising board is displayed on any premises for sale or letting, so that the question of prosecution for displaying a second or subsequent boards does not arise.

Housing

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had to the consultation paper, "A New Financial Regime for Local Authority Housing in England and Wales."

Mr. Trippier: The official consultation period on this paper ended on 7 October although we made clear from the outset that we would receive comments after that date. By Christmas, 325 responses had been received in my Department and the Welsh Office. Of these, 129 respondents indicated that they would like their views to be made publicly available. I have today place a list of those responses in the Libraries of both Houses, through which copies may be obtained.

Rats

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the effect on the asset value of Thames Water of the cost of the treatment of rats within sewers, or otherwise within its works and lands, including all direct treatment, treatment by agencies and private contractors, for the financial years 1981-82 to 1987-88 inclusive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* None. It is unlikely to have any effect. Furthermore, the Department does not hold information on the amount spent on pest control by Thames Water.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the names of the members of the British Waterways Board; if he will indicate which members of the board are living in Wales and which are appointed specifically to represent Welsh interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The names of the British Waterways Board members are as follows:

Mr. David Ingman (Chairman)
Dr. Alan Robertson CBE (Vice Chairman)
Sir Peter Hutchison Bt
Dr. Brian Goodman
Mr. John Gordon
Mr. David Yorke.

None of the present members lives in Wales. Board members are not appointed to represent specific interests.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will construct a table in the same form as figure F4 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government", showing for the first year with safety net and fully in place the relationship between gross and net poll tax to net household income for *(a)* single pensioner households, *(b)* other single person households, *(c)* two adult and *(d)* three adult households.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Reliable information cannot be provided at the level of detail requested, because of the small numbers of some household types in the sample survey on which such estimates are based. The tables below show the information requested for each household type in the format of figure F4 in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714, but using the income ranges shown in figure F3. These estimates are based on data contained in the family expenditure survey and the illustrative community charge levels published on 23 June 1988.

Table 1

Relationship of gross and net community charge with safety nets (1990-91 position: England) to net household income (Pounds per week, 1988-89 prices)

	Ranges of net household income (£ per week)					
	Under 50	*50-100*	*100-200*	*200-300*	*300+*	*All*
(a) Single pensioner households						
Community charge						
Gross £ per week	4·49	4·66	4·76	[1]—	[1]—	4·65
Net £ per week	1·00	2·33	4·75	[1]—	[1]—	2·48
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	9·6	6·9	3·5	1·9	[1]—	6·0
Net	2·2	3·5	3·5	1·9	[1]—	3·2
(b) Other single adult households						
Community charge						
Gross £ per week	4·60	4·76	4·81	5·00	5·24	4·81
Net £ per week	1·41	2·47	4·50	5·00	5·20	3·57
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	10·9	6·4	3·4	2·1	1·3	3·8
Net	3·3	3·3	3·2	2·1	1·3	2·8
(c) Two adult households Community charge						
Gross £ per week	[1]—	9·14	9·20	9·32	9·70	9·31
Net £ per week	[1]—	3·35	7·64	9·18	9·66	7·87
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	[1]—	10·6	6·1	3·8	2·3	4·3
Net	[1]—	3·9	5·1	3·8	2·3	3·7
(d) Three or more adult households						
Community charge						
Gross £ per week	[1]—	[1]—	14·42	14·86	16·44	15·57
Net £ per week	[1]—	[1]—	7·40	12·16	15·11	12·75
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	[1]—	[1]—	8·9	6·0	3·9	4·9
Net	[1]—	[1]—	4·6	4·9	3·6	4·0

[1] No reliable figures available.

Table 2

Relationship of gross and net community charge with no safety nets (England) to net household income (Pounds per week, 1988-89 prices)

	Ranges of net household income (£ per week)					
	Under 50	*50-100*	*100-200*	*200-300*	*300+*	*All*
(a) Single pensioner households						
Community charge						
Gross £ per week	4·99	4·80	4·64	[1]—	[1]—	4·75
Net £ per week	1·03	2·34	4·63	[1]—	[1]—	2·47
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	9·9	7·1	3·4	1·9	[1]—	6·1
Net	2·2	3·5	3·4	1·9	[1]—	3·2
(b) Other single adult households						
Community charge						
Gross £ per week	4·97	5·06	4·96	5·13	5·49	5·03
Net £ per week	1·46	2·54	4·62	5·12	5·45	3·67
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	11·8	6·8	3·5	2·2	1·4	4·0
Net	3·5	3·4	3·3	2·2	1·3	2·9

	Ranges of net household income (£ per week)					
	Under 50	*50-100*	*100-200*	*200-300*	*300+*	*All*
(c) Two adult households Community charge						
Gross £ per week	[1]—	9·52	9·34	9·15	9·03	9·26
Net £ per week	[1]—	3·43	7·62	9·00	9·00	7·71
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	[1]—	11·1	6·2	3·8	2·2	4·3
Net	[1]—	4·0	5·1	3·7	2·2	3·6
(d) Three or more adult households Community charge						
Gross £ per week	[1]—	[1]—	14·83	14·99	16·14	15·54
Net £ per week	[1]—	[1]—	7·54	12·21	14·79	12·64
As a per cent. of net income in each range						
Gross	[1]—	[1]—	9·2	6·0	3·8	4·9
Net	[1]—	[1]—	4·7	4·9	3·5	4·0

[1] No reliable figures available.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached a conclusion on the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee that a charge be considered for payments of vehicle excise duty refunds.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government have carefully considered the implications of imposing an administrative charge for refunds of vehicle excise duty, in the light of the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee in its 50th report, 1985-86, "Vehicle Excise Duty Evasion and Enforcement". A number of factors have to be taken into account. The PAC rightly drew attention to the regular use of the refund facility by motor traders as part of their commercial activities. The facility is available for refunds in other circumstances and by private motorists. It could be argued that it would be unreasonable to demand payment for a refund of duty paid in advance for the use of a vehicle which is then not used for the full period of the licence. A study by the Department of the full financial implications of refunds has shown that the revenue gained by the Exchequer, because duty is not under present arrangements refunded for incomplete months, more than covers the costs of handling refund transactions. Separate handling charges are not at present made for the majority of vehicle licensing transactions, over and above the duty liable.

The Government's conclusion is that it is not necessary to introduce a charge in the context of the existing arrangements. The matter will be kept under review.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to authorise additional investment in British Rail's provincial sector to relieve overcrowding and to modernise the service.

Mr. Portillo: I have today authorised the purchase by British Rail of 138 Sprinter express vehicles at a cost of £54 million. The first of these vehicles should be entering service by early 1991. These vehicles will improve travelling conditions for passengers who travel on provincial express services and will allow more passengers to enjoy shorter journey times and in more comfort. They will be used to alleviate overcrowding on increasingly popular long distance services such as the north trans-Pennine and north-west to East Anglia. Passengers on other lines will also benefit. Extending the Sprinter express network will enable BR to re-deploy Sprinters to replace the 30-year-old vehicles still running on local Manchester and Birmingham services. As well as improving these services for passengers, they will run more cost-effectively, thereby also benefiting the ratepayer and taxpayer.

I understand that BR will be placing the order with BREL and the work is expected to be carried out at BREL's engineering works at Derby.

Flying Displays

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he proposes for improving the safety of flying displays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: A new article, 52A, is being added to the air navigation order to provide the CAA with wider powers to control air displays likely to attract substantial numbers of spectators.

The new article 52A requires the air display organiser to:

(a) obtain the permission in writing of the CAA;
(b) comply with any conditions attached to the permission; and
(c) permit participation by civil pilots only if they hold an appropriate CAA display authorisation.

The commander of a civil aircraft participating in a display under the provisions of article 52A must satisfy himself that:

(a) the organiser has CAA permission;
(b) his intended flight can comply with any conditions of the permission (and in the event shall comply with those conditions); and
(c) he has an appropriate display authorisation.

The Civil Aviation Authority is required:

(a) to ensure, before granting a permission, that the organiser is a suitable person and has competent organisation and staffing; and
(b) to satisfy itself that pilots granted a display authorisation, which will be valid for a period not exceeding two years, are fit persons by virtue of their knowledge, experience, competence, skill, physical and mental fitness to take part in displays.

These new provisions will not apply to Ministry of Defence establishments (including those used by the United States Air Force and other visiting forces). As in the past, the Ministry of Defeace controls air displays on

its own property (whether the organisers are civilian or military) and is also responsible for the control of its military personnel (and those of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces stationed in the United Kingdom) taking part in civilian air shows. The rules under which such displays are conducted are at least as stringent as those now introduced by the Civil Aviation Authority. The Civil Aviation Authority will only allow other foreign military aircraft to take part in air displays to which article 52A applies after seeking advice from the Ministry of Defence as to the acceptability of the proposed display.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* all the schemes for road building or improvement in the area of Greater London that are included in the national trunk road programme and other assessment studies, respectively, providing for each scheme its estimated cost, brief description, approximate length and names of main consultants.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 10 January]:* The information requested is as follows:

Greater London schemes under consideration and listed in the national trunk road programme—policy for roads in England 1987

Scheme	*Main consultants*	*Estimated works cost at April 1987 (£ million November 1985 prices)*	*Approximate length (miles)*	*Brief description*
M4 Junction 4 improvement	Not yet appointed	7·0	—	—
A1 Archway road	—	—	—	In abeyance
A1 Scratchwood link and M1 Junction 1 improvement	Not yet appointed	22·8	0·6	—
A3 Hook interchange	Not yet appointed	9·4	—	—
A3 Robin Hood Gate Junction	Not yet appointed	24·9	—	—
A4 Henleys' Corner (A309 Junction improvement	Not yet appointed	1·8	—	—
A4 Waggoner's Corner (A312) Junction improvement	Not yet appointed	5·8	—	—
A12 Hackney Wick—M11 Link	W. S. Atkins & Partners	106·0	3·7	Dual 3/2 Lane
A13/A17 Junction improvement	Acer Freeman Fox & Partners	1·9	—	Grade Separation
A13 Junction improvements with A1240 and B178	Acer Freeman Fox & Partners	14·7	—	—
A13 Thames Avenue—Wennington	Acer Freeman Fox & Partners	36·0	3·0	Dual 2 Lane
A23 Coulsdon inner relief road	Sir Bruce White Wolfe Barry	10·6	1·5	Dual 2 Lane
A40 Gipsy Corner Junction improvement	Sir Fred Erick Snow	16·8	—	Grade
A40 Long Lane Junction improvement	Husband & Co.	14·3	—	Grade Separation
A40 Swakeleys road Junction improvement	Husband & Co.	8·1	—	Grade Separation
A40 Western Circus Junction improvement	Cooper Macdonald & Partners	19·3	—	Grade Separation
A205 Catford Town Centre improvement	Not yet appointed	12·0	0·6	—
A406 Bounds Green—Green Lanes improvement	G. Maunsell & Partners	48·8	2·2	Dual 2 Lane
A406 Chingford road—Hale End road	Bullen & Partners	38·0	1·3	Dual 3 Lane
A406 Dysons road—Hall Lane	Sir Frederick Snow & Partners	39·5	1·5	Dual 3 Lane
A406 East London river crossing	Sir William Halcrow & Partners	151·6	5·7	Dual 2 Lane
A406 East of Silver street—A1010	Sir Frederick Snow & Partners	25·5	0·7	Dual 3 Lane
A406 Falloden Way—Finchley high road	Gifford Graham & Partners	25·6	1·9	Dual 3 Lane
A406 Golders Green road Junction improvement	Gifford Graham & Partners	9·6	—	Under Review
A406 Great Cambridge road (A10) Junction improvement	Bullen & Partners	19·6	—	Grade Separation
A406 Hanger Lane—Harrow road	Husband & Co.	57·8	1·7	Dual 3 Lane
A406 Popes lane—Western avenue	Howard Humphries & Partners	21·7	2·3	Dual 3/2 Lane
A406 Regents Park road Junction improvement	Kennedy Henderson Ltd.	40·4	—	Grade Separation
Western Environmental improvement route	Husband & Co.	85·0	2·4	Dual 2 Lane
A13 Blackwall Tunnel—Cotton street	Not yet appointed	2·2	—	—
A13 Ironbridge widening	Not yet appointed	12·5	—	—
A13 Leamouth road	Not yet appointed	2·0	—	—
A13 Movers lane	Not yet appointed	16·0	—	—
A13 Prince Regent lane	Not yet appointed	13·0	—	—
A13 West India Dock road	Not yet appointed	0·9	—	—
A23 Waddon Marsh Bridge	Mott Hay & Anderson	5·0	—	Junction improvement

No decisions have been taken on the options being considered in the assessment studies. The final reports from the consultants are due later this year.

ENERGY

Departmental Scientists

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of *(a)* chief scientists and *(b)* chief scientific advisers in his Department had a previous career in nuclear technology.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Prior to 1983, the chief scientist was recruited from outside the Department. Since 1983, the chief scientist's role has been carried out by the head of my Department's energy technology division: additional advice is supplied by a part-time chief scientific adviser, who also chairs the advisory council on R&D for fuel and power. Of the nine chief scientists appointed since 1948, three had had a previous career in nuclear technology: neither of the two chief scientific advisers appointed since 1983 have had a career in this sector.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the incidence of crimes of robbery with violence during each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information for calendar years is published in table 2.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987" Cm. 498, and for 12 months to the end of September 1988 in table 4 of Home Office statistical bulletin 36/88; copies of these publications are in the Library.

Identity Cards

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which countries of the European Community have a system of identity cards.

Mr. John Patten: The following countries of the European Community have a system of compulsory identity cards: Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Spain and West Germany. France, Italy and Portugal have a voluntary system.

Political Asylum

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of Sri Lankans living in the United Kingdom and awaiting a decision on their application for political asylum.

Mr. Renton: It is estimated that at the end of 1988 about 1,300 applications by Sri Lankans for asylum, made at the ports or following admission to the United Kingdom, were awaiting a decision. This figure is approximate. Establishing whether these applicants were all still in this country would incur disproportionate costs.

Estimates of the total number of asylum applications awaiting a decision (including those made outside of the United Kingdom), by nationality, are published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics United Kingdom" (tables 6 and 7 of issue No. 16/88). A more accurate estimate of the number of applications by Sri Lankans outstanding at the end of 1988 will be contained in the bulletin for 1988, due to be published in the summer of 1989.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women serving prison sentences on 30 November for the non-payment of fines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 30 November 1988 about 530 male and 20 female fine defaulters were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of people remanded in custody during the last 12 months subsequently received a prison sentence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest readily available information is published in table 2.6 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1987" (Cm. 547).

Criminal Injuries

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of applications awaiting hearing at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on 1 December.

Mr. John Patten: The number of applications awaiting final decision was 82,075. The number of cases awaiting a hearing (the applicant not being content with the decision made by a single member of the board on consideration of the papers) was 7,026.

Strip Searches

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records are kept when a women prisoner is strip-searched; and who may see such a record.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Records of each occasion on which an inmate is strip-searched are required to be kept only in respect of women prisoners in security category A. Such records are available for normal management purposes.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests were made at Football League matches during the first three months of the current football season; and if he will provide figures for each division of the Football League.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Provisional totals compiled by the Association of Chief Police Officers, from the start of the current season until 31 October 1988, are:

	Arrests
Division 1	672
Division 2	540
Division 3	287
Division 4	543
Total	2,042

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of vehicles that have been clamped in the Greater London area for each of the last four weeks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of vehicles clamped in those parts of the Metropolitan police district where such operations are authorised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport are as follows:

Dates	*Number of vehicles clamped*
21-27 November	2,342
28 November-4 December	2,870
5-11 December	2,870
12-18 December	2,846

Broadcasting

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will clarify the scope of his proposal to disqualify pirate radio broadcasters from holding radio authority licences.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: For the reasons given in my answer of 2 November 1988, column *652* to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) we propose a provision making it a condition of all radio authority licences that the licensee neither has a conviction for any offence committed after 1 January 1989 under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 or the Marine Etc Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 connected with the operation or running of an unlicensed broadcasting station within five years of the date of an application for such a licence, nor employs such a person in the activities covered by the licence. In the light of representations we have received we do not envisage that such a condition would apply to offences committed before 1 January 1989.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bodies have been found in each of the last five years for which records are available, in England, Wales, Scotland and Leicestershire, respectively; and how many of such bodies in each such year have not yet been identified.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The available information is as follows. In the last five years (ending 16 December 1988) 58 unidentified bodies were reported within the Metropolitan police district and are still unidentified. In the years 1983-87, 27 unidentified bodies were reported to the General Register Office for Scotland and are still unidentified. In Leicestershire, in about the last four years, three unidentified bodies of newly born infants were reported. Information for other police force areas could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Farms

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if workers employed on fish farms are covered by the terms of the Agricultural Wages Board Order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The orders made by the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales apply to those workers in agriculture as defined in the Agricultural Wages Act 1948, the interpretation of which is of course a matter for the courts. To date fish farming has not been considered to be an activity included within the definition.

Salmon Poaching

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports he has received from water authorities in England and Wales about the incidence of salmon poaching since the passing of the Salmon Act 1986: and when he now expects to invite the Salmon Advisory Committee to examine the effectiveness of the measures introduced in that Act.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since 1 April 1987, the water authorities have mounted a total of 787 successful prosecutions for offences concerning salmon and trout. A further 353 cases are pending. In addition—and during the same period—the water authorities have brought 21 successful prosecutions for the new handling offence contained in section 32 of the Salmon Act 1986 and a further 78 cases are pending.

The Salmon Advisory Committee will be asked to review the effectiveness of the new handling offences and salmon dealer licensing in the light of the operation of these provisions. I intend that the dealer licensing schemes will be introduced as quickly as possible, but it will inevitably be some time before the committee can make a proper assessment of their effectiveness.

Next Steps

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he and any other Agriculture Ministers have considered agency status under the Next Steps proposal for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that I and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have decided that the board should be considered a candidate for agency status.

Coypu (Control)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the efforts of the Coypu Control Organisation and the Ministry's coypu research laboratory to eradicate the coypu.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to report that my experts have declared the trapping programme caried out by the Coypu control Organisation a success. As a result, the campaign has been wound up, as from today. We had provided for trapping to continue until 1991 if necessary. That we have been able to bring the date forward is in no small way due to the dedicated efforts of the Coypu Control Organisation's team of trappers.

While a population of over 10,000 coypu has been eradicated no one can claim with certainty that the wild coypu is now extinct in Britain. Isolated animals may be at large and continued vigilance is needed. The public have already played a valuable part in the campaign, and any further sightings should be reported to the Ministry so that investigations can be put in hand at once.

Pigs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of support per British pig since 1980 both in constant and current prices, identifying the proportion of that support met by public funds; and if he will estimate the proportion of that support directly translated into farm incomes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The table shows the net public expenditure in the United Kingdom in the pigmeat sector and the size of the domestic pig population for each year since 1980. Pig producers did not receive any direct subsidies over this period support being confined to the provision of export refunds and payments for the short term private storage of pigmeat during times of market weakness.

	Net expenditure[1] *£ million*		
	At current prices	*At constant 1988-89 forecast prices*[2]	*Population million head*
1980-81	−16·7	−26·3	7·8
1981-82	−33·0	−47·4	7·8
1982-83	−39·8	−53·4	8·0
1983-84	−14·8	−19·0	8·2
1984-85	−10·6	−12·9	7·7
1985-86	− 1·2	− 1·4	7·9
1986-87	− 2·4	− 2·7	7·9
1987-88	− 1·7	− 1·8	8·0
1988-89	0·6	0·6	not known

Source: Annual review of agriculture 1988.

[1] Payments on export refunds and aids to private storage minus receipts from levies on Community trade arising from the application of pigmeat MCA's.

[2] Expressed in 1988-89 prices using the forecast GDP deflator in market prices.

Irish Meat

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce measures to require all Irish meat to be stamped with the word "Irish" in a pattern and size similar to the stamping of "Danish" on bacon from Denmark.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. All meat intended for human consumption must, on entry into the United Kingdom, bear a prescribed health mark confirming compliance with our health requirements. These marks show the country and plant of origin. The stamp on Danish bacon is applied by the trade for commercial purposes.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the use of organic acids to reduce contamination by salmonella in poultry feed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Research at Bristol university has demonstrated the effectiveness of organic acids in reducing salmonella contamination in poultry feedingstuffs. Although there are some drawbacks, including the additional cost involved, their use is being actively considered.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Incomes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he next expects to conduct a survey of personal incomes; and at what point the results of that survey will become known;

(2) what survey of personal incomes have been carried out since 1985-86; and at what point the results of those surveys will become known.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Inland Revenue conducts the survey of personal incomes annually and the full range of data is normally available about 18 months after the end of the tax year to which the survey refers. Projections of the data are normally available after a further two or three months. The 1985-86 survey has been in use for some 15 months, both for Government purposes and to answer inquiries from the public; some tables compiled from it will be published shortly in "Inland Revenue Statistics 1988". Data and projections from the 1986-87 survey have recently begun to be used.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* working families with children and *(b)* childless people in work had incomes below the tax threshold at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Some 700,000 families (including both single people and married couples) where the head of the household is in full or part-time work have earnings below tax thresholds in 1988-89. Of these about 300,000 are families with children. These estimates are based on projections of the results of the 1986 family expenditure survey and are subject to revision.

EC Own Resources

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the European Commmunity's new own resources decision entered into force.

Mr. Brooke: Article 11(1) of the own resources decision provides for the ORD to come into force on the first day of the month following that in which the last member state notifies the Council secretariat that it has completed its national procedures for the adoption of the Decision. Not all member states had done so by 31 December and the ORD cannot therefore enter into force before 1 February.

The Commission has accordingly informed member states that there is no legal basis for payment in January of the new GNP-related fourth resource. However, the Commission has requested VAT-related payments in January on the basis of the 1989 draft budget.

The Government believe that, pending entry into force of the new ORD, own resources contributions should be based on the system of provisional twelfths. The United Kingdom has therefore restricted its VAT-related payment in January to the level which applied under the 1988 Budget. This is around £55 million less than the sum requested by the Commission.

Raw Materials

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to introduce a resource tax on specific and scarce raw materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget Statement.

Natural Resources (Conservation and Reclamation)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to make the conservation and reclamation of scarce natural resources more fiscally and economically viable.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* On fiscal issues, I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget Statement. More general issues concerning the conservation and reclamation of scarce natural resources are variously matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Energy, for the Environment and for Trade and Industry.

Marginal Rate Taxpayers

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those groups of taxpayers with a marginal tax rate higher than 40 per cent. in addition to elderly people with incomes in the withdrawal band for age allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* About 130,000 elderly basic rate taxpayers have incomes within the short band above the aged income limit where age allowance is withdrawn. These special rules are designed to concentrate the benefit of age allowance on elderly people with relatively modest incomes. They do not affect other taxpayers.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those tax allowances that are means-tested.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Only the age allowance given to single people and married men aged 65 and over is related to income. Where income exceeds a certain limit (£10,600 for 1988-89) the allowance is withdrawn by £2 for every £3 of additional income until the level of the basic single person's or married man's allowance is reached.

Hard Corals

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what information he has of CITES-listed hard corals from the Philippines that have been seized since 1985 with the dates and grounds for seizures;

(2) if he will give details of the eight seizures of coral made since 29 August 1985.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Eight seizures made by Customs since 1985 together comprise 15 black coral necklaces, two pieces of branch coral, four pieces of brain coral, 94 pieces of which the type is not recorded centrally and two seizures of an unspecified amount and type.

Three further seizures have been recorded since I wrote to the hon. Member in July 1988. These comprise four black coral necklaces, a pair of black coral earrings and two pieces of which the type is not recorded.

The country of origin of such goods is not always ascertainable or reported; in none of the 11 cases referred to above is the origin known to be the Philippines. All seizures were made under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, the goods having been imported in contravention of Council Regulation (EEC) No 3626/82, as amended by Commission Regulation (EEC) 2384/85.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received by his Department about a low-flying aircraft in the Inverness area in the early evening of 26 May 1987; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the investigation into this incident.

Mr. Neubert: Seven complaints were received from members of the public concerning a low-flying military aircraft in the Inverness area on 26 May 1987. The aircraft concerned was identified as a United States Air Force F-111 aircraft from RAF Lakenheath on a properly briefed and authorised overflight of Dalcross airport to the north-east of Inverness. An investigation by the RAF police concluded that there was no evidence of any breach of flying regulations.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Seismography

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he will take to encourage international co-operation in the study of worldwide seismography.

Mr. Jackson: The United Kingdom participates extensively in international seismology, and hosts the International Seismological Centre. The Natural Environment Research Council is particularly involved through its British Geological Survey, which is one of the world's leading earthquake monitoring organisations. The NERC's collaborations include renewing a five year agreement to exchange seismologists and equipment with the Institute of the Physics of the Earth in Moscow; plans to sponsor a small group of earthquake engineers from Imperial college to work in Armenia; and an anticipated invitation to lead an earthquake prediction programme later this year with the European Community and the People's Republic of China. The NERC also sponsors United Kingdom university researchers in fundamental seismology, with substantial international connections. These varied efforts represent a significant level of encouragement for international co-operation in this field.

Staff-Pupil Ratios

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing staff-to-pupil ratios in each local education authority area in England for each category of school.

Mr. Butcher: The pupil-teacher ratio in each category of maintained school in each local education authority in England in January 1988 is given in the following table.

Pupil/teacher ratios in schools January 1988

Local education authority	*Nursery PTR*	*Primary PTR*	*Secondary PTR*	*Special PTR*
Barking	—	20·9	14·7	5·1
Barnet	17·3	20·1	14·2	5·4
Bexley	19·7	22·4	16·0	7·3
Brent	16·1	18·5	11·1	3·5
Bromley	—	23·0	15·8	5·8
Croydon	20·7	21·8	15·1	5·6
Ealing	16·1	19·3	13·9	5·7
Enfield	—	21·7	15·1	6·0
Haringey	13·1	19·0	11·9	4·5
Harrow	—	21·8	15·6	6·2
Havering	—	22·6	15·1	6·6
Hillingdon	24·1	22·0	15·6	7·0
Hounslow	—	20·1	14·9	5·3
Kingston upon Thames	16·8	21·5	14·2	7·5
Merton	—	21·6	15·9	5·2
Newham	18·7	21·5	14·0	5·1
Redbridge	—	24·0	16·1	5·9
Richmond upon Thames	15·8	20·9	15·5	5·8
Sutton	20·0	22·7	16·5	6·0
Waltham Forest	19·2	21·2	11·8	3·4
Inner London	16·1	17·6	13·1	5·7
Birmingham	23·3	23·2	16·0	6·7
Coventry	28·1	22·5	14·4	5·9
Dudley	31·5	22·7	14·0	7·8
Sandwell	20·3	22·4	14·0	6·7
Solihull	—	23·1	15·5	5·4
Walsall	30·1	20·8	13·9	5·6
Wolverhampton	21·1	20·1	13·8	5·8
Knowsley	—	20·7	13·4	6·2
Liverpool	18·7	21·0	14·4	7·1
St. Helens	19·5	22·3	14·0	7·6
Sefton	17·7	23·2	16·1	7·6
Wirral	16·2	21·6	15·7	7·3
Bolton	20·0	22·9	15·1	5·5
Bury	22·4	22·4	15·0	5·8
Manchester	13·5	21·4	12·9	5·7
Oldham	—	22·5	15·5	5·7
Rochdale	20·6	22·3	14·1	6·0
Salford	21·1	21·7	13·8	6·8
Stockport	25·4	23·3	15·0	6·5
Tameside	13·9	23·5	15·5	5·9
Trafford	—	21·9	14·8	7·2
Wigan	18·0	21·2	13·6	6·2
Barnsley	30·2	21·6	15·2	6·3
Doncaster	—	21·5	15·4	8·3
Rotherham	20·7	21·2	15·3	6·8
Sheffield	16·0	19·9	14·0	4·2
Bradford	15·8	19·8	15·2	4·5
Calderdale	20·5	22·9	15·5	6·4
Kirklees	16·2	20·9	15·0	6·9
Leeds	16·8	20·0	14·7	6·2
Wakefield	16·7	21·8	15·2	6·5
Gateshead	16·0	20·7	14·6	6·7
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	15·4	19·7	13·8	4·9
North Tyneside	22·2	18·6	12·9	6·5
South Tyneside	18·7	20·6	14·3	7·1
Sunderland	19·2	22·1	15·1	6·5
Isles of Scilly	—	13·1	9·2	—
Avon	19·7	23·8	16·4	6·1
Bedfordshire	18·1	22·0	16·8	6·5
Berkshire	17·8	23·4	16·0	6·7
Buckinghamshire	23·3	24·0	16·2	7·4
Cambridgeshire	19·7	23·4	16·2	6·1

Local education authority	Nursery PTR	Primary PTR	Secondary PTR	Special PTR
Cheshire	21·7	23·6	16·2	6·8
Cleveland	19·1	22·3	15·1	6·1
Cornwall	22·7	23·4	16·3	7·4
Cumbria	18·7	21·7	14·9	5·8
Derbyshire	19·0	21·2	14·4	5·2
Devon	24·9	23·3	16·6	7·7
Dorset	—	23·3	16·3	8·0
Durham	20·8	22·0	16·0	7·1
East Sussex	21·5	22·7	16·2	7·3
Essex	18·8	22·7	16·6	6·6
Gloucestershire	—	22·6	16·0	7·0
Hampshire	21·5	22·5	16·2	8·3
Hereford and Worcester	—	23·7	16·6	7·3
Hertfordshire	20·4	21·7	15·4	5·4
Humberside	24·1	22·2	15·0	6·7
Isle of Wight	—	23·5	16·5	8·0
Kent	15·5	24·0	16·4	8·3
Lancashire	20·1	23·3	15·6	6·5
Leicestershire	22·9	22·9	15·0	6·1
Lincolnshire	22·2	23·9	16·6	7·8
Norfolk	21·3	22·6	15·9	7·5
North Yorkshire	20·3	22·0	15·9	7·0
Northamptonshire	19·9	22·9	16·1	5·8
Northumberland	29·3	22·8	16·1	6·3
Nottinghamshire	15·1	21·1	14·8	7·0
Oxfordshire	21·8	23·0	16·6	5·8
Shropshire	15·8	21·4	15·3	7·3
Somerset	—	23·1	16·3	7·2
Staffordshire	29·0	23·2	16·3	6·7
Suffolk	25·4	22·5	16·7	6·5
Surrey	15·4	21·4	15·4	7·1
Warwickshire	21·0	21·9	16·0	7·4
West Sussex	24·5	22·9	16·7	8·0
Wiltshire	—	22·6	16·3	6·7
England	19·4	22·0	15·4	6·4

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled Persons Register

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a register for disabled was last compiled in Northern Ireland; and if he will seek to produce an up-to-date register.

Mr Viggers: The Department of Economic Development maintains a register of disabled people who are capable of employment but handicapped in obtaining it. The register is continuously updated.

Ards Peninsula (Medical Coverage)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated population in the Ards peninsula south of the line between Kircubbin and Portavogie; how many medical doctors have their practices based within this area; what arrangements are made at weekends in this area for a doctor on call service; and whether the size of population meets the criteria for the provision of a additional doctor in this area.

Mr. Needham: The estimated population of the area based on the Northern Ireland 1981 census is approximately 6,000. Five doctors, two in separate practices in Portaferry and three in one practice in Kircubbin, are based in this area and provide medical services to a total of 10,205 patients. At weekends the doctors in Portaferry share an on-call arrangement with the doctors in Kircubbin. The need for an additional doctor in the area would be a matter for consideration by the Eastern Health and Social Servies Board, having regard to the advice of the statutory medical committee of the Central Services Agency. I understand that the criteria taken into account by the medical committee include not only the population of the area but also the average list size of each doctor and the distribution of practices in the area.

Fair Employment Agency

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the reports published by the Fair Employment Agency, showing for each case the date the investigation began and the date of the publication of the report.

Mr. Viggers: The information is as follows:

	Public sector	Start date	Publication date
1.	British Broadcasting Corporation	1st phase February 1979 2nd phase November 1982	Joint Publication November 1983 Joint publication November 1983
2.	Northern Ireland Electricity Service	November 1979	November 1982
3.	Northern Ireland Civil Service	November 1979	December 1983
4.	Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	March 1982	June 1984
5.	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	August 1981	October 1985
6.	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	May 1983	November 1985
7.	Southern Health & Social Services Board	May 1983	March 1986
8.	Ulster Museum	November 1984	March 1986
9.	Derry City Council	May 1986	September 1987
10.	Northern Ireland Railways Co. Ltd.	June 1986	March 1988
11.	North Eastern Education & Library Board	January 1986	September 1988
12.	Western Health & Social Services Board	July 1986	October 1988

	Private sector	Start date	Publication date
13.	Belfast Telegraph	March 1980	September 1983
14.	Employment patterns in the Belfast area with particular reference to engineering	November 1977	September 1983
15.	Employment patterns in the Londonderry area	February 1981	September 1983
16.	Unipork Ltd.	April 1984	February 1985
17.	Report of an investigation into the nine Building Societies in Northern Ireland:	October 1984	March 1986
	Halifax Building Society		
	Woolwich Building Society		
	Abbey National Building Society		
	Gateway Building Society		
	Nationwide Building Society		
	Leicester Building Society		
	Leeds Permanent Building Society		
	Anglia Building Society		
	Progressive Building Society		
18.	Report on an investigation into the principal banks in Northern Ireland:		
	TSB	August 1984	
	Northern Bank	April 1985	Joint publication March 1986
	Allied Irish Banks		
	Ulster Bank		
	Bank of Ireland		
19.	Report of investigation into eight insurance companies:		
	Prudential Insurance Company	December 1984	Joint publication November 1986
	Pearl Insurance Company	January 1985	
	Commercial Insurance Company	October 1984	
	General Accident Assurance Company	November 1984	
	Britannic Insurance Company	January 1985	
	Refuge Assurance	January 1985	
	United Friendly Society	April 1985	
	Royal Insurance	June 1984	
20.	Irish News Ltd.	July 1984	May 1988
21.	Century Newspapers Limited	November 1984	May 1988
22.	Hyster (NI) Ltd.	September 1986	November 1987
23.	AVX Ltd.	March 1987	May 1988
24.	Northern Ireland Airports Ltd.	April 1987	June 1988
25.	Lucas Stability Electronics	March 1987	September 1988
26.	Gallaher Tobacco Limited	August 1987	December 1988

Copies of the reports are available in the Library of the House of Commons.

Employment Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* all those firms, businesses and employers in East Londonderry constituency which employ more than 25 persons;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* all those firms, businesses and employers in the Foyle constituency which employ more than 25 persons;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* all those firms, businesses and employers in the area covered by the district health and social security offices in *(a)* Strabane, *(b)* Londonderry, *(c)* Magherafelt, *(d)* Limavady and *(e)* Coleraine;

(4) if he will list in the *Official Report* all those firms, businesses and employers in the local district council area of *(a)* Strabane, *(b)* Londonderry, *(c)* Magherafelt, *(d)* Coleraine and *(e)* Limavady which employ more than 25 persons.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested on individual undertakings is obtained in confidence under the appropriate legislation and cannot be disclosed without the prior written consent of each undertaking concerned.

Postgraduate Awards

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown of the number of postgraduate awards provided to Northern Ireland students over the past seven years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Postgraduate awards are made by the Department of Education and by education and library boards. The information is as follows:

DENI awards

Type of Award	*Academic Year*	*Number of Awards given*
Postgraduate Teacher Training	1982-83	188
	1983-84	197
	1984-85	208
	1985-86	213
	1986-87	215
	1987-88	265
	1988-89	345
Postgraduate studentships	1982-83	240
	1983-84	291
	1984-85	311
	1985-86	307
	1986-87	311
	1987-88	311
	1988-89	313
Postgraduate Bursaries	1982-83	145
	1983-84	136
	1984-85	131
	1985-86	133
	1986-87	133
	1987-88	133
	1988-89	133

Education and Library Boards

Type of award and name of board	*Academic year*	*Number of awards given*
Postgraduate Discretionary Awards		
Belfast Education and Library Board	1982-83	52
	1983-84	45
	1984-85	84
	1985-86	38
	1986-87	100
	1987-88	88
	1988-89	88
South-Eastern Education and Library Board	1982-83	67
	1983-84	54
	1984-85	76
	1985-86	52
	1986-87	50
	1987-88	63
	1988-89	67
North-Eastern Education and Library Board	1982-83	67
	1983-84	66
	1984-85	90
	1985-86	74
	1986-87	84
	1987-88	79
	1988-89	[1]79
Southern Education and Library Board	1982-83	60
	1983-84	35
	1984-85	65
	1985-86	68
	1986-87	79
	1987-88	62
	1988-89	87
Western Education and Library Board	1982-83	Not available
	1983-84	49
	1984-85	49
	1985-86	79
	1986-87	56
	1987-88	63
	1988-89	[1]63

[1] Estimate.

James O'Hara

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to whether James O'Hara, of Lisburn, Northern Ireland, convicted at Dublin in June 1974, was employed by the British Army to kidnap individuals in the Republic of Ireland; what inquiries have been carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The matter has been fully investigated by the appropriate authorities and no evidence was found to support this allegation.

Mr. Fred Holroyd (Photographic Material)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date the Royal Ulster Constabulary contacted Mr. Fred Holroyd concerning the return of photographic material referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *36*.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 10 January 1989):* I understand that the RUC communicated with Mr. Holroyd in August 1985.

Lower Crescent, Comber (Contract)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings the Northern Ireland Housing Executive recently completed in the contract at Lower crescent, Comber; on what date and in which newspapers invitations to contractors for this scheme were advertised; how many applications were received; how many firms were then invited to submit a tender; how many tenders were received; and whether the contract was awarded to the lowest tenderer.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the chief executive has advised me that a total of 22 dwellings were completed; advertisements in relation to 19 dwellings were placed in the *Belfast Telegraph, News Letter,* and *Irish News* on 16 April 1985, in the *County Down Spectator* and *Newtownards Chronicle* on 18 April 1985 and in the *Down Recorder* on 19 April 1985; 14 applications were received; 10 firms were invited to tender;

eight tenders were received and the contract was awarded to the second lowest tenderer. A further three dwellings were added to the contract in negotiation with the successful tenderer.

HEALTH

Water (Aluminium Sulphate)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are currently issued by his Department regarding the toxicity and potential effects on health of aluminium sulphate in drinking water.

Mr. Freeman: No guidelines on aluminium sulphate in drinking water are issued by this Department. However, EC directive 80/778/EEC sets maximum admissible concentrations of 0·2 milligrams of aluminium and 250 milligrams of sulphate per litre of drinking water, and stipulates the conditions under which these concentrations may be exceeded without breach of the directive. Responsibility for the application of the directive lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The World Health Organisation has set guidelines for aluminium and sulphate in drinking water of 0·2 milligrams per litre and 400 milligrams per litre respectively. Aluminium and its salts are of low toxicity and these values are not based on health effects but on risks of discolouration from aluminium and unpalatability from sulphate at higher concentrations.

Resources

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish expenditure on *(a)* National Health Service hospital services in England and *(b)* family planning clinic services in England in cash terms and real terms for each year since 1980, and also expressing both as an index based upon 1980.

Mr. Mellor: Following is information derived from the annual accounts and financial returns of health authorities in England:

Year	*(a) Hospital services—Total revenue expenditure*				*(b) Community Health Services revenue expenditure—Family planning*			
	£000 (cash)	*Index*	*£000 (at 1987-88 prices)*	*Index*	*£000 (cash)*	*Index*	*£000 (at 1987-88 prices)*	*Index*
1980-81	5,603,590	100	8,306,818	100	21,640	100	32,079	100
1981-82	6,211,403	111	8,382,164	101	22,806	105	30,776	96
1982-83	6,650,895	119	8,377,135	101	25,481	118	32,095	100
1983-84	7,007,557	125	8,442,284	102	28,462	132	34,289	107
1984-85	7,387,520	132	8,471,343	102	30,399	140	34,859	109
1985-86	7,753,315	138	8,435,297	102	32,298	149	35,139	110
1986-87	8,255,383	147	8,691,267	105	33,810	156	35,595	111
1987-88[1]	8,786,818	157	8,786,818	106	n.a		n.a	

[1]Provisional figure—as yet subject to audit.

Sources:

(a) Summarised annual accounts of regional and district health authorities and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. (Predecessor authorities for the years prior to 1982-83)

(b) "Health Services Costing Returns"—1980-81 to 1986-87 (latest available)—DHSS/Welsh Office.

Notes to the table

1. Capital expenditure is excluded.
2. The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1987-88 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflator.
3. The figures for "hospital services" are exclusively for those services. That is expenditure on community health, ambulance, blood transfusion and other services (usually included in total Hospital and Community Health Services expenditure) is excluded.
4. The figures for "community health services—family planning" are derived from community health service costing returns submitted by district health authorities in England and reflect expenditure which is primarily clinic based. Expenditure on family planning services and related activity undertaken in hospitals and by general medical practitioners as part of family practitioner services is excluded.

Salmonella (Eggs)

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many farms were involved in outbreaks of salmonella attributed by him to eggs; and in what parts of the country they are located.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* At the request of medical colleagues in 1988, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food investigated 22 farms which were suspected as a possible source of eggs involved in 17 outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning. In some of these outbreaks more than one farm could have been the source of the eggs. On only seven farms was the same salmonella serotype to that involved in the food poisoning outbreaks isolated. The seven farms concerned are located in Kent, Sussex, Dorset, Hertfordshire, Yorkshire and Humberside.

Doctors' Pay

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the real terms increase in doctors' remuneration since 1979.

Mr. Mellor *[pursuant to his reply, 14 December 1988 c. 606.]:* I regret that my previous reply contained an error. The reply should have read "25·5 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1987-88".

SOCIAL SECURITY

Cold Weather Payments

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were paid under last winter's supplementary benefit exceptionally cold weather scheme; how much benefit was paid; and how many claims were refused.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Library.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the administration costs of the independent living fund are being borne by his Department.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* It is estimated that in the first year of operation the Department will have met about 64 per cent. of the fund's administration costs.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tobacco

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the value of exports of tobacco products from the United Kingdom in each of the last six years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is given in the table:

United Kingdom exports of tobacco products 1982-87
value in £ million

Year	Exports (FOB)
1982	383·0
1983	426·9
1984	409·2
1985	456·3
1986	393·7
1987	433·5

Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note: Figures for 1987 are provisional.

Bees and Bee Products

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the balance of trade in bees and bee products for each of the years since 1979 in standard prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade in bees is not separately identified in the *Overseas Trade Statistics*. The only bee product that is separately identified is honey; figures which are only available at current prices are given in the table.

Balance of trade in honey 1979-88
value in £ million

	Imports	Exports	Balance
1979	9·7	1·5	−8·2
1980	8·6	1·3	−7·3
1981	9·2	1·0	−8·2
1982	11·6	1·5	−10·1
1983	12·7	1·5	−11·2
1984	13·3	1·8	−11·5
1985	12·1	2·2	−9·9
1986	11·6	1·5	−10·1
1987	13·8	1·7	−12·1
[1]1988	10·7	1·2	−9·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
(i) Figures for 1987 and 1988 are provisional.
(ii) Exports valued at fob, imports cif.
[1] January to November.

American Airlines (Investment)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the restrictions on United Kingdom investors purchasing shares in American airlines.

Mr. Alan Clark: United Kingdom investors are permitted to purchase shares in American airlines. However, the United States Federal Aviation Act (1958) requires that an "air carrier" be "a citizen of the United States". In order to satisfy this requirement, it is a condition that no more than 25 per cent. of the voting interest of a United States air carrier is owned or controlled by persons who are not United States citizens.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Armenia

72. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Soviet authorities concerning assistance for the earthquake victims of Armenia.

73. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts the Government have made to aid earthquake victims in Armenia.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 9 December I announced emergency aid of £5 million in response to the Armenian earthquake. So far this has been used, in collaboration with the British Red Cross, to finance 12 relief flights carrying tents, clothing, medical supplies, emergency food rations, heavy earth-moving equipment and other relief supplies. We have also financed a team of firemen and a team of medical experts as well as providing £113,500 to CARE Britain for food parcels. All this assistance has been made in response to specific requests from the Soviet authorities, which have expressed their gratitude for all the help provided from Britain.

The search and rescue phase of the relief operation is now over and the balance of our £5 million will be used for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities which are now under consideration by the Soviet authorities.

Bangladesh

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much bilateral aid was given to Bangladesh in 1988; and how it was spent.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure in 1987—the latest year for which figures are available—was £34·8 million. In the current financial year total expenditure is expected to be about £50 million. We are providing project aid, commodity aid, food aid and technical co-operation as well as substantial emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance following the recent floods and cyclone. The main sectors to which our aid is directed are energy, communications, natural resources and health.

SCOTLAND

NHS Grading

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting

staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in the Ayrshire and Arran health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table.

Previous grade	*Total posts regraded (whole-time equivalents)*	*Percentage of staff assimilated to each of the new grades* A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	934·57	94·3	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	16·34	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	457·37	—	—	65·2	34·8	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Train	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	16·86	—	—	4·4	95·6	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	713·71	—	—	—	24·6	63·0	12·4	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	138·87	—	—	—	0·4	54·7	44·9	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	284·23	—	—	—	—	—	38·5	59·7	1·8	—
Sister II Midwife	99·68	—	—	—	—	—	21·5	78·5	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	.	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	78·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	29·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·5	10·3	86·2
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66·7	83·3
Senior Nurse 7	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Clinical Teacher	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·5	87·5	—
Fieldwork Teacher	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Practical Work Teacher	14·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Tutor	13·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Tutor Midwife	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Post basic students										
Enrolled	36·00	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	86·00	—	—	—	94·2	5·8	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	37·5	62·5	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	3,077·92	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* nurses and *(b)* midwives have been regraded and at what grade in each unit of Lothian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Information on the regrading results of individual health board units is not held centrally. Details of the numbers of nurses assimilated to each of the new grades in Lothian health board are given in the table.

Previous Grade	*Total posts regraded (whole-time equivalent)*	*Percentages of nurses assimilated to each of the new grades* A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	2,413·19	92·8	7·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	47·90	—	84·4	15·6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	1,176·36	—	—	30·7	69·3	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Trainee	31·30	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	53·16	—	—	—	24·9	73·2	1·9	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	2,086·15	—	—	—	17·6	81·5	0·9	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	220·23	—	—	—	—	57·6	42·4	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	31·18	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—	—
Sister II	837·38	—	—	—	—	—	18·7	78·6	2·6	0·1
Sister II Midwife	115·85	—	—	—	—	—	2·9	5·4	1·7	—
District Nurse Sister II	195·53	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Sister I	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	189·78	—	—	—	—	—	—	99·5	0·5	—
Senior Nurse 8	67·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·5	91·0	1·5
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	18·7	81·2	—
Senior Nurse 7	71·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Clinical Teacher	60·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Fieldwork Teacher	28·28	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Practical Work Teacher	31·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—
Tutor	69·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0
Tutor Midwife	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0

Previous Grade	*Total posts regraded (whole-time equivalent)*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
Post basic students										
Enrolled	77·00	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	308·00	—	—	—	89·3	8·4	2·3	—	—	—
Department Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	8,152·39	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Health Service (Grading)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the additional cost of the regrading of nurses and midwives for Lothian health board; and what proportion of that additional cost is to be met by the board from its own resources in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Lothian health board has been given an additional £14·936 million over and above its initial allocation for 1988-89 to allow it to meet the cost of the pay awards to nurses and other staff covered by the review bodies. Allocations to health boards for 1989-90 have not yet been made.

Health Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board *(a)* its budget for 1987-88, *(b)* the number of staff employed and *(c)* the population covered.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is contained in "Scottish Health Statistics 1988", compiled by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service, which was published on 19 December 1988. Copies are available in the Library.

Piper Alpha

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the measures taken to monitor the area surrounding the remains of the Piper Alpha platform for pollution; how long these measures will continue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Immediately following the incident on 6 July, aerial surveys to detect oil spillage were carried out by the Department of Transport marine pollution control unit. Although some spillage occurred, the total quantity was quite small—about 500 tonnes—and dispersed quickly with no major environmental impact.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, in co-operation with the operators, Occidental Petroleum (Caledonian) Ltd., has been monitoring debris and other samples from the vicinity of the Piper Alpha site for other potential sources of contamination. A quantity of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and small amounts of radioactive isotopes were known to have been on the Piper Alpha platform before the incident. Efforts to locate these substances, or their original containers, have been inhibited by debris and the damaged state of the platform remains.

Small traces of PCB contamination have been found in debris and sediment samples. Further samples are being taken at present to enable the extent of any release of PCBs to be assessed. So far no traces of radioactive contamination have been detected.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy, explained on 8 December, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), the conditions attached to the approval of the abandonment programme for Piper Alpha include requirements for further surveys and monitoring of the site and for sediment sampling and examination, to be repeated at such times as the Secretary of State may subsequently direct. They also provide for any leakage of oil or gas to be sealed to his satisfaction and for steps to be taken to deal with any unacceptable levels of pollution.

Fish Farms

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow may expect an answer to his letter dated 5 November 1988 to the Minister of State at his Department on the subject of predator control on marine fish farms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My noble Friend the Minister of State has written to the hon. Member today.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if workers employed on fish farms are covered by the terms of the Agricultural Wages Board Order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The orders made by the Scottish agricultural wages board relate to workers employed in agriculture as defined in section 17 of the Agricultural Wages (Scotland) Act 1949, the interpretation of which is a matter for the courts. To date fish farming has not been considered to be an activity included within the definition.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make available to the public the results of research into the presence of residues of Nuvan 500 EC in salmon flesh; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when and where the results of research into the environmental and health effects of the use on marine fish farms of Nuvan 500 EC will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 28 November 1988.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether *(a)* all products known as pesticides and *(b)* Nuvan 500 EC should comply with the Control of Pesticides Regulations for the supply to, and storage and handling on, marine fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 cover pesticides as defined in regulation 3 including Nuvan 500 EC as approved for use in poultryhouses. The regulations apply to sale, supply, storage, use and advertisement in Scotland as well as England and Wales.

Any product or substance that is added to the water or given orally or otherwise for the treatment, control or prevention of ectoparasites on farmed fish however, is defined as an animal medicine and is subject to controls under the Medicines Act 1968.

EMPLOYMENT

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department has investigated, or is currently studying, the usefulness of a national identity card to his departmental responsibilities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on Thursday 15 December (*Official Report*, columns *1080-82*).

Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, during the first three quarters of 1988, how many claimants have been referred to the employment service jobclub at Balham jobcentre; and of those how many *(a)* found work, *(b)* entered training, *(c)* entered EAS and *(d)* entered the community programme.

Mr. Lee: During the first three-quarters of 1988, 391 people were referred to Balham jobcentre jobclub. It is not possible to say how many of these were claiming benefits. Of those referred, 106 actually joined the jobclub with the following outcomes:

(a) 38 found work
(b) 12 entered training
(c) one entered EAS
(d) three entered the community programme.

Balham job club serves an inner city area where many unemployed people have difficulty in finding work. Nevertheless over half its members achieve a positive outcome.

Bridging Allowance

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by region, how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in receipt of bridging allowance at 23 and 30 September, 7, 14, 21 and 28 October and 4, 11, 18 and 25 November.

Mr. Cope: Full statistical information for YTS bridging allowance recipients is available on a monthly basis. The figures relate to those being paid by computer and clerically by UBOs.

The dates for which figures are available are:

13 October 1988
10 November 1988
8 December 1988.

On those dates the number of 16 and 17-year-olds receiving YTS bridging allowance, by region, were as follows:

	13 October 1988	*10 November 1988*	*8 December 1988*
East Midlands and Eastern	2,986	1,354	1,164
West Midlands	4,093	1,371	1,074
Wales	2,257	845	642
London and South Eastern	4,634	1,703	1,422
South West	1,525	680	540
Northern	2,729	1,028	742
Yorks and Humberside	4,658	1,836	1,392
Scotland	7,374	2,158	1,793
North West	6,432	2,183	2,015
Totals	36,688	13,158	10,784

Mechanical Excavators

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made towards the harmonisation of vehicle controls on mechanical excavators in use within the European Community in the interests of operator safety.

Mr. Cope: Between now and 1992 European standards will be prepared to support the harmonisation of safety requirements for all machinery including excavators. No decision has been made within the European Community as to the inclusion of vehicle controls.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: Between March 1983 and June 1988 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom increased by 2,178,000 to 25,739,000 the highest level on record. This rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Tourism

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many section 4 schemes have been funded for tourist-related projects in Nottingham since 1985; how much investment has been generated in each from how much grant in each; and how many jobs, both full-time and part-time, have been created and at what cost per head in each case.

Mr. Lee: Six schemes have been offered assistance under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 in Nottingham since 1985. Total investment is as follows:

Project	*Assistance offered* £	*Total eligible project cost* £	*Additional jobs expected by the applicant (full-time equivalent)*	*Assistance per job* £
Waltons Hotel	18,173	98,173	2·0	9,087
TIC Nottingham	13,961	69,807	1·0	13,961
Talbot House Hotel	9,000	45,500	1·5	6,000
Bridgford Lodge Hotel	42,000	344,000	12·5	3,360
Tales of Robin Hood	155,000	950,000	21·0	7,381
Pageant of Robin Hood	150,000	1,358,212	29·0	5,172

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who, other than his Department's civil servants and PA Management Consultants, are involved in the tourism policy review.

Mr. Lee: The review team consists of civil servants and PA management consultants. They have talked to nearly 150 individuals and organisations in the tourism industry and received submissions. Their report and its recommendations will be considered by Ministers before any decisions are taken.

Mr. Allan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the tourism review will include analysis of the rôle of all Government Departments involved.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of foreign tourists and British visitors to London in 1986-87 and 1987-88 and the value of tourism to London in those years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The following table gives the latest available information:

Tourist visits and expenditure in London

	Numbers of visits (000s)[1]		*Expenditure (£ millions)*	
	1986	*1987*	*1986*	*1987*
Overseas residents	8,190	9,260	3,203	3,561
British residents	13,000	15,000	670	755
Total	21,190	24,260	3,873	4,316

[1]Visits of one or more nights only.
Sources: International Passenger Survey and British Tourism Survey Monthly.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of jobs dependent on tourism in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested, but it is estimated that in September 1988 the number of employees in employment in the hotel and catering industry in London was 173,000.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of journeys made by foreign tourists and British visitors to London on *(a)* the underground, *(b)* the buses, *(c)* the trains and *(d)* other modes of transport and the total value of the journeys made in 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. However, the London tourist board carries out a survey of a small sample of overseas visitors to London every summer. This survey gave the following information:

Percentage of all overseas visitors who used transport at least once during stay in London in:

per cent.

Mode of Transport	*Summer 1987*	*Summer 1988*
Underground	90	92
Buses (LRT)	70	71
British Rail Train	25	18

The estimates from this survey were based on a very small and non-random sample and are, therefore, subject to considerable sampling error.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the value of tourism to the hotel and catering industry in London in 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested, but it is estimated that overseas and domestic visitors staying in London for one night or more spent a total of £3·9 billion in 1986 and a total of £4·3 billion in 1987.

Employment Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to reduce *(a)* the number of managing agents for youth training schemes and *(b)* the number of youth training schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Training Agency's area offices negotiate contracts with managing agents to provide sufficient YTS places to meet the needs in each locality. As the number of young people eligible for YTS falls over the next few years, the overall number of schemes and of managing agents may well need to be adjusted. Any such adjustments will be made locally, to match local requirements.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the decision of some local authorities to boycott employment training.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Employment training has made a very successful start with more than 100,000 people already in training, in many cases with the help of local authorities. About 170 local authorities are already acting as training managers and 50 acting as training agents for the scheme.

I very much regret that certain Labour controlled local authorities have decided actively to oppose and boycott employment training. This deplorable stance serves only to distance those local authorities from the needs of the unemployed people in their communities. A recent High Court decision made it clear that Liverpool city council had been using its discretionary powers unlawfully to

penalise organisations taking part in employment training. I trust that other authorities will take careful note of that judgment in framing their policies for the future.

Energy Grants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many energy grants have been paid in each month since April.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer, 22 December 1988]:* The information requested is provided in the following table:

1988	£
April	16,828
May	16,463
June	7,049
July	9,389
August	9,475
September	24,562
October	17,202
November	8,867
Total	109,835

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NATO (Fortieth Anniversary)

12. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Government intend to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

21. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Government intend to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the foundation of NATO.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave a list of a number of events in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) yesterday. In addition to these, the next ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council is scheduled to take place in London on 8-9 June 1989.

Vietnamese Refugees (Hong Kong)

15. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Vietnamese Government regarding the repatriation of boat people arriving in Hong Kong.

47. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Vietnam in connection with the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I discussed the problem of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong with the Vietnamese Foreign Minister on 7 June 1988 and with his Deputy on 30 September. Her Majesty's embassy in Hanoi is in regular touch with the Vietnamese authorities.

36. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with the Governor of Hong Kong on the plight of the Vietnamese refugees.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are in close and frequent contact with the Government of Hong Kong on all aspects of the problems of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

Malta

16. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his contacts with the Government of Malta over the past three years.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have frequent contacts with the Maltese Government, the most recent ones being in September last year, when their Prime Minister visited London for three days. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be seeing the Maltese Prime Minister again on 13 January.

Kurds (Representations)

17. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Iraq concerning the plight of Kurdish people.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I told the hon. Member in a written reply on 25 November, at column *142*, we have repeatedly expressed our concern at the treatment of the Kurdish community in Iraq. I also refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's comments to the House on 30 November at column 689. I raised the question of alleged use of chemical weapons against Kurds in my speech on 9 January to the Paris conference on chemical weapons.

Mr. Charles Powell

18. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects Mr. Charles Powell to return to the Foreign Office.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In due course.

Yasser Arafat (UN Speech)

19. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister to discuss the implications of the speech of Mr. Yasser Arafat to the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to have an early meeting with Mr. Arens, but no date has yet been set.

Iran (Political Prisoners)

20. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to *(a)* the Government of Iran and *(b)* relevant international bodies about the killings of political prisoners in Iran.

37. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Iran regarding executions of political prisoners there.

Mr. Waldegrave: The reports of executions are a matter of grave concern. We have consistently condemned such violations of human rights in Iran. We co-sponsored the resolution on human rights in Iran which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 8 December.

USSR (International Relations)

22. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has been able to make an assessment of the main foreign policy points in Mr. Gorbachev's 6 December speech to the United Nations in regard to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's relations with the United Kingdom and other Western countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. We have welcomed Mr. Gorbachev's speech as the clearest exposition so far a less ideological Soviet approach to foreign policy. This approach, if maintained, should help to improve further east-west relations and on our bilateral relations with the Russians, and lead to increasing practical progress in arms control, human rights and the settlement of regional conflicts.

United States Secretary of State

23. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United States Secretary of State; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met Mr. Shultz at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels on 8 and 9 December. They discussed a wide range of issues.

European Community-Gulf Co-operation Council

24. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the state of relations between the European Community and the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Community's relations with the Gulf Co-operation Council are excellent. A first stage economic co-operation agreement and a political joint declaration were signed last June. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State returned today from a most successful trip to four Gulf Co-operation Council countries—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

USSR (Military Reductions)

25. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has discussed President Gorbachev's proposed conventional arms reductions with the Foreign Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: I discussed the matter with my NATO colleagues at the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting in Brussels on 8 December. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to our statement on conventional arms control in which we welcomed the proposed reductions as a "positive contribution" to redressing the heavy conventional imbalance in Europe. We also called for cuts in the number of tanks to half than present levels, going well beyond the reduction announced by Mr. Gorbachev; and for limits on the tank holdings of individual countries much lower than those of the Soviet Union, even after the proposed cuts. The full text can be found in the copy of the statement placed in the Library of the House.

Falkland Islands (Housebuilding)

26. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of housebuilding on the Falkland Islands since 1982.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1982, 136 housing units have been built and 42 mobile homes installed in the Falkland Islands. A further 84 units are at various stages of construction or planning, including 36 for Falkland Islands Government, which should be finished by the end of April.

We and the Falkland Islands Government recognise the crucial importance of housing. A senior British consultant visited the Falklands in November to help prepare a new comprehensive housing policy. We are also encouraged that in recent months a number of building plots have been purchased by individual islanders for private housing development.

Afghanistan

27. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the current situation in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: The Afghan people continue to resist Soviet military occupation and the unrepresentative PDPA regime. We look forward to the withdrawal of all Soviet troops by 15 February in accordance with the Geneva agreements, and to the restoration of Afghan independence and self-determination.

President Gorbachev (UK Visit)

28. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects that President Gorbachev will next visit the United Kingdom.

56. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects that President Gorbachev will next visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Gorbachev's planned visit to the United Kingdom last month had to be postponed due to the tragic earthquake in Armenia. We hope that it will be possible to agree new dates for the visit in the near future.

Hungary

29. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Hungary.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has no firm plans to visit Hungary.

Taiwan

30. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet representatives of the Taiwan Government.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1950, successive British Governments have dealt with the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China. Accordingly there can be no question of my right hon. and learned Friend meeting representatives of the authorities in Taiwan.

South African Ambassador

31. **Mr. Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of South Africa; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the South African ambassador on 23 September. They discussed a wide range of issues of common interest.

Middle East

32. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit the middle east to discuss the peace process.

Mr. William Waldegrave: The Arab/Israel dispute was among the subjects my right hon. and learned Friend discussed during his visit to the middle east earlier this month.

Spain and Portugal (EC Accession)

33. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Spanish and Portuguese Foreign Ministers to discuss the entry of those countries to the Western European Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 30 November 1988 at column *306*.

South West Africa

34. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress which has been made towards a South African withdrawal from South West Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We greatly welcome the signature of an agreement in New York on 22 December paving the way for Namibian independence. We congratulate the United States Government on their skilful mediation and all the signatories for the statesmanship which they have shown.

British Citizens (Overseas Travel)

35. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he is planning to seek to reduce hooliganism on the part of British citizens travelling abroad during the 1989 tourist season.

Mr. Eggar: We shall continue our public education campaign in the United Kingdom and abroad to reduce the level of hooliganism and rowdy behaviour by British citizens. Further TV and radio public information messages are planned for this year. We shall also continue to co-operate closely with the Association of British Travel Agents and tour operators, and with the central and local authorities of the main tourist countries. Together with the Home Office we are actively pursuing Spanish proposals to post a small number of British police to Spanish resort areas during the coming tourist season, for liaison purposes.

British Embassies (Export Activities)

38. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on recent efforts to improve the export promotion activities of British embassies.

Mrs. Chalker: Our efforts to improve the export promotion activities of British posts abroad is a continuous process, to which we attach great importance. Such activities are scrutinised regularly by the overseas inspectorate system in the light of agreed commercial objectives which are revised annually.

United States

39. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next visit the United States; and what issues he plans to discuss with President Bush's Administration.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State hopes to visit the United States as soon as possible after the inauguration of the new President, when he will discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest with the new Secretary of State and others.

El Salvador

40. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the human rights situation in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: We condemn all abuses of human rights. We remain concerned by reports of an increase in human rights violations on both sides of the conflict in El Salvador and we shall continue to raise our concerns with the Salvadorean Government whenever appropriate.

Tibet

41. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of China on the subject of Tibet.

Mr. Eggar: The subject of Tibet was raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State with the then Chinese Foreign Minister, Wu Xueqian when he visited the United Kingdom in March 1988.

President Vassiliou of Cyprus

42. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the leader of the Greek Cypriot regime; and what was discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met President Vassiliou of Cyprus on 4 October, when he called on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to review progress in the intercommunal talks on the Cyprus problem.

Nigeria

43. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on political and economic relations with Nigeria.

Mrs. Chalker: We enjoy close and cordial political and economic relations with Nigeria.

Human Rights Convention (USSR)

44. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the human rights convention proposed by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have agreed in principle that the third stage of the CSCE conference on the human dimension should be held in Moscow, but our attendance depends upon the Soviet Union making further specific major human rights improvements between now and 1991.

Kampuchea

45. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy of recent developments in Kampuchea.

71. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the threat to peace and security in Kampuchea; and what initiatives he expects to take in either the Security Council of the United Nations or in any of its specialised agencies.

Mr. Eggar: We wish to see Cambodia restored to its place as a free and neutral country. We support the work of those directly concerned to achieve this aim. Vietnam's illegal occupation remains a major obstacle. There have been a number of encouraging developments recently, both internal and external. More progress is needed before the United Nations Security Council can play a formal role. Some specialised United Nations agencies (for example UNBRO, WFP, UNICEF) are already doing useful work.

54. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the situation in Kampuchea with representatives of the Governments of *(a)* China, *(b)* the United States and *(c)* Thailand.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State discussed Cambodia with his American and Chinese counterparts in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in September 1988, and with the Thai Foreign Minister in August 1987. The Prime Minister discussed this subject with the Thai Prime Minister in August 1988 and my noble Friend, the Minister of State will raise it when he visits Bangkok later this month.

Israel (Occupied Territories)

46. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to impose any pressure or sanctions on the Israeli Government for their failure to abide by the Geneva convention in the occupied territories.

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall continue to urge the Israelis to administer the occupied territories in accordance with international law and accepted standards of human rights. We do not believe that economic sanctions would help improve conditions in the occupied territories.

Soviet Foreign Minister

48. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next meet the Soviet Foreign Minister; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has no firm plans to meet Mr. Shevardnadze at present. He will, no doubt, accompany Mr. Gorbachev to the United Kingdom when the Soviet President's visit is reinstated.

South Korea

49. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts his Department is making to promote commercial relations with South Korea.

Mr. Eggar: Commercial relations with the Republic of Korea are good, although we are obliged to make regular representations to the Korean authorities about access to their market. The British embassy in Seoul stands ready to help both existing exporters and those companies which are new to the Korean market. They are expecting 13 sponsored trade missions in 1989, matching the 13 which visited in 1988. British exports to Korea increased by 48 per cent. in 1987 over 1986. The first nine months of 1988 saw a further 10 per cent. increase.

Bophuthatswana

50. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will now recognise Bophuthatswana as an independent country.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

Bangladesh

51. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Bangladesh.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not visited Bangladesh, but my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur did so in December 1988.

Western European Union

52. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the results to date of the British presidency of the Western European Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence hosted a ministerial council meeting of the WEU in London on 14 November. The major event of that occasion was signature of a protocol for the accession of Portugal and Spain to the modified Brussels treaty 1954. These two countries will become full members of WEU once ratification procedures are complete. A satisfactory outcome to the enlargement negotiations with Portugal and Spain was one of the main priorities for our Presidency, and its early attainment is most satisfactory.

A further priority was to develop the WEU as a forum for co-ordinating European approaches to out of area issues. The ministerial council noted with approval the success of the joint naval activities in the Gulf, particularly the mine-sweeping operation Cleansweep, as a concrete example of the work being done by WEU in defence co-operation.

Our other main priorities—to elaborate on the commitments in the Hague platform on European security interests, and to use WEU as a forum for frank discussion of key European security issues—have also been pursued energetically. The ministerial council considered a report on implementation of the platform and endorsed further work on its elaboration, which will continue over the next six months. Ministers also took note of a report on progress made in fulfilling the mandate on arms control and defence requirements given by WEU Ministers at their meeting in the Hague in April 1988.

Chile

53. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the role of Her Majesty's Government following the plebiscite in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no formal representations following the plebiscite in Chile, though we continue our dialogue with Chilean political leaders. We also continue to receive expressions of the diverse views of members of the British public.

59. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Governments of other European countries about ways of encouraging the transition to full democracy in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We have frequent discussions with our European partners on Chile. The position of the Twelve was set out in their statements of 7 October and 1 November, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Fiji

55. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to pay an official visit to Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Fiji at present.

President Gorbachev (United Nations Speech)

57. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet his United States counterpart to discuss the West's response to Mr. Gorbachev's United Nations speech of 8 December.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State hopes to visit the United States as soon as possible after the inauguration of the new President and Administration. He plans to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest with his new opposite number and others, including the prospects for east-west relations.

European Community (Foreign Policies)

58. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any proposals further to integrate the foreign policies of the European Economic Community member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We play a very full part in the European political co-operation, and will continue to do so, on the basis of the provisions of title III of the Single European Act. We have no proposals at present for extending either the existing arrangements for co-operation or the wide range of foreign policy issues on which co-operation takes place. We find such co-operation extremely useful.

Commonwealth Co-operation

60. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's current policy towards the development of Commonwealth co-operation.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to support the development of Commonwealth co-operation and to play our full part in its financing. We already make annual contributions to the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation, the Commonwealth youth programme, the Commonwealth foundation and the Commonwealth secretariat of 30 per cent. of their budgets, and to the Commonwealth Science Council. In addition, Britain is assisting the Commonwealth of Learning, a new Commonwealth distance education network, by financing the development of the documentation centre and a credit transfer register at the British Open university. The cost will be between £1 million and £2 million over a period of five years. We also provide a substantial grant-in-aid (£2·65 million in 1988-89) to the Commonwealth Institute.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

61. **Mr. Forman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) with the chief spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Mr. Bassam Abu Sherif.

63. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) with the chief spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Mr. Bassam Abu Sherif.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) on 12 December at column 398.

Caribbean

62. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit the Caribbean.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to pay an official visit to the Caribbean, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is currently visiting the area and I shall be visiting later this month.

Cyprus

64. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the discussions taking place in New York and Cyprus between President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash on the reunification of Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reviewed the outcome of the New York discussions with President Vassiliou, as have officials with Mr. Denktash and the United Nations Secretary-General. Some progress was achieved in the first round of the intercommunal talks and we have encouraged President Vassiliou to respond to the positive elements in the ideas which Mr. Denktash put forward in November.

68. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the state of the present negotiations taking place under United Nations auspices, about the future of Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: Following their meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General in New York on the 22 and 23 November, President Vassiliou of Cyprus and Mr. Denktash, leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, have begun a second round of talks in Nicosia. These are still continuing. We believe that, with good will on both sides, there is a real opportunity for the achievement of the comprehensive Cyprus settlement which we all want to see.

Human Rights Conference

65. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received further details on the proposed conditions for a human rights conference to be held in Moscow.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Soviet Union has given assurances that conditions of access to the openness of the third stage of the CSCE conference on the human dimension, assuming this is held in Moscow, will be no less than for similar meetings in the west.

Iran

66. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the restoration of normal diplomatic relations with Iran.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State agreed with the Iranian Foreign Minister on 30 September in New York that full diplomatic representation would be restored in Tehran and London. Final agreement on the details was reached on 10 November. Her Majesty's embassy in Tehran has now re-opened under our own flag. Relations between the two countries will be conducted in accordance with the Vienna conventions on diplomatic and consular relations, to which both countries are signatories. The chargé d'affaires, Mr. Gordon Pirie, has had meetings with Iranian officials and gained consular access to the two British prisoners in Iran one of whom has now been released. This is a first step in developing a more constructive and businesslike relationship with Iran. We will consider the exchange of ambassadors in due course.

Islamabad (UK Post)

67. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to improve the administration of the United Kingdom post in Islamabad.

Mr. Eggar: Following a recent inspection in Islamabad it has been agreed that the permanent establishment of entry clearance officers be increased from 26 to 28, and that all new appointees from the diplomatic service will have a month's overlap with their predecessors. Four further ECO's are being provided for nine months from January 1989 and a similar number is planned for a lesser period in 1990. Also being considered is an increase in the numbers of locally engaged staff, including interpreters, in 1989.

Southern Africa

69. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British efforts to facilitate the peace process in Angola and Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We have given our full and public support to the US-led negotiations, and we applaud the signature of agreements in New York on 22 December paving the way for Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola and for Namibian independence. We shall press those concerned to move on swiftly from agreement to implementation.

Chemical Weapons

70. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards an international ban on the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive global ban on chemical weapons continue at the conference on disarmament in Geneva. Progress has been made but complex issues remain to be resolved, particularly concerning verification.

Chittagong Hill Tracts

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy on events in the Chittagong hill tracts in Bangladesh.

Mr. Eggar: We have made clear to the Bangladesh authorities the level of concern in this country about alleged abuses of rights of the tribal people in the Chittagong hill tracts. We are encouraged by the widespread recognition in Bangladesh of the need to find a political solution to the current problems.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 January 1989

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to comply with the ruling by the European Court of Justice that European Community legislation for milk quotas was deficient in that it did not take into account those who had ceased milk production under a Community-financed scheme in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Commission has put forward proposals to deal with this problem, which were discussed by this House on 30 November. Discussion on these proposals will resume at the Council of Ministers (Agriculture) meeting on 23 and 24 January.

Eggs

Mr. Adley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of his Department's attempts to revitalise the egg market.

Mr. Ryder: I am delighted that the egg scheme has helped to restore stability to the market.

Capital Grants

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the farming industry following his recent announcement on the revision of capital grants.

Mr. Ryder: The proposals that I announced on 28 November for a new farm and conservation grant scheme have received a generally warm welcome from a wide range of agricultural organisations as well as from environmental, heritage and other bodies.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of the occurrence of salmonella enteritidis phage 4 in wild birds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no specific evidence of the occurrence of salmonella enteritidis phage 4 in wild birds, but it is recognised that wild birds are susceptible to infection with salmonella.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any evidence to suggest that salmonella enteritidis phage 4 infection of free range hens or their eggs may originate from wild birds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Salmonella organisms are widespread in the environment and the potential for contamination through wild birds is known to exist. However, I have no specific evidence that salmonella enteritidis phage 4 type infection in laying hens and their eggs originates from wild birds.

Meat Tenderisers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the administration of meat tenderisers to farm animals shortly before slaughter.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Representations have been received following the announcement of our decision not to accept the Farm Animal Welfare Council's recommendations that the administration of tenderisers to cattle before slaughter should be banned. These representations are being given full consideration.

Horse Sales

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to introduce a code of practice on conditions at horse sales and markets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's proposals for a new statutory order to protect the welfare of horses at markets, sales and fairs, and for a code of practice, were issued for comment to interested organisations in November. Following consideration of comments received, we will complete the new legislation and code of practice later this year.

Set Aside Scheme

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the set-aside scheme.

Mr. Ryder: I have received a variety of views from organisations and individuals about particular aspects of the scheme.

Chickens (Feedingstuffs)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many plants processing and producing feedingstuffs for chickens are in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and what is the precise location of each one.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Ninety-one protein processing plants in England and three in Wales produce animal protein for incorporation into animal feedingstuffs including feedingstuffs for chickens. Information on the identity of the plants is collected by my Department in order to carry out inspections as provided for by statute. It would be wrong to disclose such data for purposes other than those for which they were collected.

DEFENCE

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the effect of the availability of the Channel tunnel on the movement of troops and logistical arrangements for the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are considering the possibility of using the tunnel for the peacetime movement of personnel and material. Its use in an emergency is covered by an agreement between the Governments of the United Kingdom and France, but the tunnel does not form part of our reinforcement planning and is seen only as a potential bonus.

Low-flying Corridor (Edinburgh-Glasgow)

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what flow control exists in the low-flying corridor between Edinburgh and Glasgow; and on what date such flow control measures were introduced.

Mr. Neubert: A one-way south east to north west flow pattern was established to the west of Falkirk in August 1988 for military aircraft below 2,000 ft.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses occurred at less than 2,000 ft outside controlled airspace in the area between Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1987 and 1988; and how many of these involved (i) two military aircraft, (ii) a military aircraft and a civil aircraft and (iii) two civil aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: There were no such air misses reported in this area in 1987. One such air miss report, involving three military and one civilian aircraft, was filed on 10 August 1988. A second such air miss report, involving one military and one civilian aircraft, was filed on 18 November 1988. Both reports are being investigated by the joint air miss section of the National Air Traffic Services and the observations of the joint air miss working group will be published in due course.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to alteration of the structure and boundaries of the United Kingdom low-flying system in the Edinburgh-Glasgow area.

Mr. Neubert: Whilst the operation of the United Kingdom military low flying system is kept under continuous review, there are currently no plans to alter the structure of the system in the Edinburgh-Glasgow area.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying military aircraft movements were recorded in the gap between the Edinburgh and Glasgow avoidance areas in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: Information on low-flying military aircraft movements is recorded on the basis of low-flying areas. It is not available for the area between Glasgow and Edinburgh, which forms only a part of a low flying area covering much of southern Scotland.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what instructions are given to military pilots concerning low flying over the town of Harthill;

(2) what instructions are given to military pilots concerning low flying over the town of Shotts.

Mr. Neubert: Military pilots are instructed to avoid overflying the centre of major conurbations and built-up areas at low level athough we cannot guarantee to avoid small communities such as Shotts and Harthill. Pilots will, however, make every effort to avoid populated areas wherever possible.

SCOTLAND

Organ Transplants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his organ transplant campaign.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 29 December I announced proposals aimed at increasing the number of organs donated for transplantation. Details of the new arrangements are about to be issued for consultation. Health boards will be asked to keep specific records.

Nuvan 500 EC

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's marine laboratory's research into the environmental effect of Nuvan 500 EC; and when he expects the results to be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The results of studies of the toxicity of dichlorvos, the active ingredient of Nuvan 500 EC, to the larvel forms of the lobster homarus gammarus and the herring clupea hargenus will be published later this year.

Other studies of the effects on marine life of prolonged or repeated exposure to low levels of dichlorvos are planned.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department is taking to prevent dichlorvos from Nuvan 500 EC from entering the aquatic environment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory is studying ways of minimising release of dichlorvos into the marine environment by current methods of treatment in co-operation with the fish farming industry.

Fish Farms

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department is undertaking to find environmentally acceptable treatments for sea lice on salmon farms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scientists at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory are currently undertaking or taking part in collaborative studies of ways of minimising release of dichlorvos (the active ingredient of Nuvan 500 EC) after bath treatment of fish, and on possible alternative chemical or vaccine treatments for sea lice infestation.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce stricter guidelines controlling the size, number and spacing of farm sites and the size and stocking density of production units in fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: When my right hon. and learned Friend announced the outcome of the review of the consultative procedures operated by the Crown Estate Commissioners on 19 December, he indicated that the Crown Estate Commissioners have been revising their guidelines for the siting and design of fish farms first

produced in 1987. I understand that a draft of this will shortly be the subject of consultation with interested parties. The Government have no plans to introduce separate guidance.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the frequency of inspections of fish farms and their effectiveness in control of the use of substances such as Nuvan 500 EC.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Advice which may have a bearing on the use of Nuvan 500 EC may be given by veterinary practitioners who prescribe it for use in treating sea lice infestation.

Fish farms are subject to inspection, as and when appropriate, by officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory in relation to diseases of fish legislation as well as by river purification boards and the Health and Safety Executive in relation to their functions.

Lockerbie Air Disaster

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding uranium carried on board the Pan American aircraft which crashed at Lockerbie; whether any has been traced to any water supply; what action he has taken; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Pan American aircraft which crashed at Lockerbie was carrying a quantity of depleted uranium as counterweights in the tailplane structure. These counterweights, each weighing around 1kg, are not a radiological or toxic hazard, and most have already been recovered. The material recovered so far is not a public health hazard.

None of the depleted uranium has been traced to a water supply. The solubility of the metal in water is extremely low and does not threaten water supplies. However, as a precautionary measure, Dumfries and Galloway regional council took water samples at Winterhope reservoir and at Terrona springs near Langholm which have been analysed by the National Radiological Protection Board. The results obtained can be accounted for by natural backgroundf radioactivity and show that levels are well within the World Health Organisation limits for drinking water and give no cause for concern.

My officials have been and remain in close contact with regional council staff throughout and following the incident.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider providing long-term financial assistance to Lockerbie to meet the cost of restoration and support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for home affairs and the environment has told Dumfries and Galloway regional council and Annandale and Eskdale district council that the Government will respond most sympathetically to requests for special financial assistance towards additional costs incurred by them arising from the disaster and for any additional capital expenditure allocations which might be required for restoration work. In particular, he announced on 5 January an additional allocation to Annandale and Eskdale district council which will allow an immediate start on a £1 million programme of reinstatement and improvement of the whole of the council housing in Lockerbie affected by the air disaster. As further restoration requirements are identified, the Government will consider how they and their agencies can best support the local authorities concerned in this work.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many family practitioners have facilities for breast screening for cancer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Due to the nature and cost of the equipment involved, no family practitioners in Scotland have facilities for breast cancer screening by mammography, the most effective method for the detection of early breast cancer. The comprehensive screening service now being established should be available throughout Scotland by 1991. Individual practitioners can, of course, clinically examine patients for signs of breast cancer.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many family practitioners have computerised call/recall systems for cervical cancer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally. Most health boards in Scotland now have at least an interim computerised call/recall system in operation for cervical cancer screening.

TRANSPORT

Vessel Losses

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what inquiries or investigations have been carried out into the sinking of the Ardlough, Ocean Gain, Mhari-L, Alert II, St. Patrick, Emma Jane and Inspire; what has been the result of such inquiries or investigations; which of the incidents took place in submarine exercise areas or normal submarine lanes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Inquiries were carried out by the Department's marine surveyors into casualties involving Ardlough, Ocean Gain, Mhari-L, Alert II, Emma Jane and Inspire, but not the French flag vessel St. Patrick. Of those investigated, only the Ardlough and Mhari-L were in a submarine exercise area. The positions of submarine lanes are classified information.

The surveyors found no evidence of submarine involvement in any of the cases investigated.

Boeing 737 Accident (Manchester Airport)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any means open to him to expedite publication of the report about the British Airtours Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The period for requesting a review board ends today. Production of the report can begin tomorrow if there is no last-minute request for a review.

The report is long and contains complex appendices in colour. Her Majesty's Stationery Office will require about seven weeks to produce the document.

THE ARTS

Sadler's Wells

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the proposed relocation of the Sadler's Wells royal ballet to Birmingham.

Mr. Luce: I have learnt of this proposal with great pleasure. I am very appreciative of the considerable contribution which the city of Birmingham is to make to the promotion of dance. The move will enable the Sadler's Wells royal ballet to perform on a larger scale and to tour more widely. It will bring ballet of the highest quality to more people than ever before. To facilitate the move, I propose to make an extra payment of £0·5 million to the Arts Council, to be passed to the royal opera house, in 1989-90.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Allowances and Reliefs

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the real increase in the direct tax allowances and reliefs published in table 6.5 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91", Cm. 288-I.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 15 March 1988, at columns *494-95*.

The following table shows those items where subsequent revision has led to a change in the estimated percentage movement in real terms between 1986-87 and 1987-88 together with the latest estimate of that movement.

	Per cent. change
Income Tax:	
Single person's allowance	−2
Widow's bereavement allowance	12
Relief for:	
Lump sum payments to pensioners	−1
Qualifying interest on loans for purchase or improvement of owner-occupied etc. property	−1
Inheritance Tax/Capital Transfer Tax:	
Transfers to charities on death	10

Company Cars

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax income was lost to the Exchequer in each of the years 1979 to 1987 through the provision of tax concessions for companies leasing company cars.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* I regret that information on the tax deductible expenditure of leasing company cars is not available centrally.

PRIME MINISTER

Brussels

Q15. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Brussels.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Court of Auditors

Q54. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the manner in which reports of the Court of Auditors are dealt with by the EEC; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have consistently supported the work of the Court of Auditors. In particular, we were instrumental in ensuring that the court's annual reports are formally considered by the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers. We shall continue to press for appropriate follow-up action on the court's specific recommendations.

Cumbernauld and Kilsyth

Q89. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to visit Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Commission (Vice-Presidents)

Q95. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will discuss with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Felipe Gonzales, the methods of appointment of the vice-presidents of the European Commission.

The Prime Minister: No. The method of appointment of vice-presidents of the EC Commission is laid down in the EC treaties.

Cyprus

Q132. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister when she last met the President of Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: I last met President Vassiliou of Cyprus in London on 25 November, when we reviewed progress in the intercommunal talks on the Cyprus problem.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Human Rights Conference, Moscow

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the Soviet Union's proposal to hold an international conference on human rights in Moscow.

The Prime Minister: We have agreed in principle that the third stage of the CSCE conference on the human dimension should be held in Moscow. But our attendance depends upon the Soviet Union making further specific major human rights improvements between now and 1991.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many members of the Science and Engineering Research Council are professionally qualified chemists;

(2) how many members of the Science and Engineering Research Council are professionally qualified *(a)* physicists, *(b)* biologists and *(c)* engineers.

Mr. Jackson: The Science and Engineering Research Council currently includes the following number of professionally qualified members in the categories requested:

	Number
Chemists	6
Physicists	6
Biologist	1
Engineers	3

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many members of the administrative or support staff of the Science and Engineering Research Council are professionally qualified chemists;

(2) how many members of the administrative or support staff of the Science and Engineering Research Council are professionally qualified *(a)* physicists, *(b)* biologists and *(c)* engineers.

Mr. Jackson: The number of SERC staff, possessing professional qualifications (at least first degree or equivalent) in the categories requested, on 30 November 1988, was as follows:

	Chemists	*Physicists*	*Biologists*	*Engineers*
Administration	14	18	36	6
Scientific and Engineering support	52	439	10	407
Total	66	457	46	413

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

1992 Hotline

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many calls have been received by his Department's 1992 hotline.

Mr. Maude: The DTI's 1992 hotline has received over 108,000 calls since it opened on 18 March.

Post Office (Industrial Relations)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set up an independent inquiry into the state of industrial relations in the Post Office, involving specific reference to the situation during 1988 at the main post office in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I very much regret the unofficial industrial action which led to disruption in the Melton Mowbray sorting office in November, but responsibility for resolving difficulties of this nature must rest with the Post Office management and employees. I am informed by the Post Office chairman, Sir Bryan Nicholson, that, following the recent national strike, he has set up a high-level industrial relations review team, which will include an independent industrial relations expert from outside the Post Office. The Post Ofice unions have been invited to contribute to the review, the report of which will incorporate the findings of a separate examination of the situation at Melton Mowbray.

British Steel

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the privatisation of British Steel.

Mr. Atkins: The privatisation of British Steel was successfully completed at the end of last year. Despite uncertain stock market conditions, the United Kingdom offer for shares was 3·3 times subscribed, with over half a million applications from private investors. The taxpayer will receive £2,500 million from the sale and the company will now be better placed, following privatisation, to meet the challenges and opportunities of the international steel market.

Cellular Phones

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancashire whether he has any plans to permit Vodafone to sell air time directly to cellular phone users; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications, who alone has powers under the Telecommunications Act 1984 to consider modifications to the Racal-Vodafone licence which would permit this.

Singapore (Balance of Trade)

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current balance of trade between the United Kingdom and Singapore.

Mr. Alan Clark: The crude balance of visible trade with Singapore in the first 11 months of 1988 was (provisionally) in surplus by £47·1 million.

Fur and Fur Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the quantities of fur and fur products exported from the United Kingdom in each of the last five years broken down by country of destination.

Mr. Alan Clark: The table lists 18 of the largest countries of destination accounting in each year for over 90 per cent. of exports of these products:

United Kingdom exports of fur and fur products

m/tonnes

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Total exports of which:	2,823	2,957	2,704	2,898	3,060
France	173	233	168	191	172
Belgium/Luxembourg	63	72	43	46	60
Federal Republic of Germany	817	734	764	592	479
Italy	565	601	498	581	667
Ireland	45	51	40	39	22
Denmark	39	59	43	36	24
Greece	61	76	60	65	64
Spain	128	161	204	316	503
Finland	32	25	23	27	51
Switzerland	73	36	39	35	89
Austria	37	42	34	28	18
Israel	19	21	9	11	22
China	6	1	8	2	41
Hong Kong	236	28	222	367	268
South Korea	58	87	56	98	74
Japan	54	76	40	73	120
Canada	108	81	104	87	91
United States of America	71	73	115	113	111

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics: SITC (R2) items 212.01, 212.09, 613.0, 848.31.
Notes: Figures exclude headgear and footwear which are not separately identified. 1987 figures are provisional.

WALES

Cancer Screening

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many family practitioners have facilities for breast screening for cancer.

Mr. Grist: In view of the specialised mammography equipment and radiological expertise required, breast screening in Wales is to be carried out by specialist units, not by individual family practitioners.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many family practitioners have computerised call/recall systems for cervical cancer.

Mr. Grist: Computerised call and recall for cervical screening is carried out in Wales by all family practitioner committees on behalf of district health authorities. Information is not held centrally on any supplementary systems operated by individual family practitioners.

National Parks (Planning Applications)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics are kept by his Department concerning planning applications in Welsh national parks.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Statistics on planning applications are provided quarterly by the national parks in Wales on the general development control returns, form WOPS1 (national park) and form WOPS2, copies of which have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Explosives (South London)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement about the discovery of arms and explosives in south London on 20-21 December;

(2) what information he has on the source of the explosives discovered in south London on 20-21 December and the means by which they were brought into the country.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 10 January, at columns *487-88*.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of *(a)* 17 to 20-year-olds and *(b)* adults, were sentenced to immediate custody for violence against the person, sexual offences, burglary, robbery, theft and handling, fraud and forgery, criminal damage, drug offences and indictment motoring, in magistrates and Crown courts, by each police force area during 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The information available is given in the following tables. Numbers sentenced for sexual offences and for robbery are very small for individual forces so that percentages based on these would be misleading.

Table 1

Proportion of persons aged 17-20 sentenced at all courts for indictable offences who were given immediate custody England and Wales 1987

	Violence against the person	*Burglary*	*Theft and handling*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*	*Drug offences*	*Indictable motoring*
Avon and Somerset	18·6	30·7	7·6	9·2	14·7	2·9	21·2
Bedfordshire	17·4	44·0	11·3	[1]7·5	[1]21·4	[1]25·0	1·6
Cambridgeshire	20·3	41·2	8·5	5·6	[1]11·6	[1]23·1	19·8
Cheshire	24·9	46·0	15·6	3·9	11·8	14·7	14·7
Cleveland	23·0	39·9	11·7	3·6	[1]13·2	[1]0·0	14·1
Cumbria	18·6	34·6	8·7	3·3	[1]19·0	2·8	10·3
Derbyshire	23·1	37·9	12·0	10·8	16·2	[1]7·7	12·9
Devon and Cornwall	19·0	36·5	11·9	9·9	18·4	10·0	11·2

	Violence against the person	Burglary	Theft and handling	Fraud and forgery	Criminal damage	Drug offences	Indictable motoring
Dorset	13·5	22·2	7·2	[1]4·3	[1]17·6	[1]0·0	6·4
Durham	20·9	35·2	11·8	10·5	[1]56·5	[1]0·0	17·1
Essex	24·2	35·7	11·5	10·1	12·2	[1]11·5	21·4
Gloucester	14·8	23·8	6·9	4·6	9·8	[1]8·0	8·2
Greater Manchester	25·9	42·4	14·7	5·3	19·7	7·8	27·3
Hampshire	14·9	26·8	8·5	6·3	10·5	11·5	13·8
Hertfordshire	21·3	29·7	11·1	8·1	31·6	[1]0·0	23·5
Humberside	20·7	40·4	11·9	2·7	[1]18·4	[1]3·2	16·5
Kent	20·8	28·6	11·5	7·7	26·1	12·3	12·5
Lancashire	17·8	34·7	11·0	6·5	18·3	9·0	20·0
Leicestershire	22·7	36·6	9·7	7·7	16·3	[1]8·0	20·0
Lincolnshire	15·3	27·9	5·9	1·9	18·0	[1]9·1	16·9
City of London	[1]0·0	[1]28·6	7·1	[1]12·5	0·0	[1]0·0	[1]0·0
Merseyside	21·1	43·7	13·6	6·0	[1]12·9	19·8	28·2
Metropolitan Police	24·7	37·6	12·3	8·9	18·8	11·4	24·4
Norfolk	19·2	35·9	7·7	10·8	8·3	[1]11·4	9·4
Northamptonshire	21·2	37·2	11·0	[1]7·0	[1]12·7	[1]0·0	8·5
Northumbria	25·9	37·5	11·7	3·8	25·3	[1]10·3	17·8
North Yorkshire	12·8	36·7	11·3	7·7	12·7	[1]3·1	9·6
Nottinghamshire	18·9	41·5	11·9	9·3	21·1	[1]6·5	22·7
South Yorkshire	21·4	35·2	10·3	2·9	21·9	[1]0·0	16·2
Staffordshire	11·6	35·9	10·1	8·0	18·8	[1]3·1	12·1
Suffolk	20·3	34·3	8·7	[1]11·1	8·1	[1]6·5	5·7
Surrey	16·5	34·0	8·6	[1]6·3	5·9	5·7	12·7
Sussex	15·6	30·6	9·5	8·8	14·0	9·6	10·3
Thames Valley	19·7	38·5	11·3	9·2	13·5	1·7	13·7
Warwickshire	23·0	42·4	14·2	[1]3·6	[1]17·1	[1]10·0	[1]13·0
West Mercia	20·1	30·2	12·9	11·9	11·6	[1]4·2	16·1
West Midlands	26·0	41·1	14·8	9·8	19·4	1·6	25·1
West Yorkshire	24·2	36·4	11·9	8·0	15·0	1·0	18·4
Wiltshire	19·7	26·3	6·3	[1]5·9	19·3	[1]7·1	10·4
Dyfed Powys	4·0	29·8	5·9	[1]0·0	5·1	[1]0·0	[1]10·5
Gwent	11·9	28·8	7·7	0·0	[1]10·5	[1]0·0	14·1
North Wales	14·1	32·7	5·8	9·4	15·1	3·7	4·1
South Wales	17·2	35·1	8·8	1·4	13·8	5·6	15·8
England	21·5	37·0	11·6	7·6	16·8	8·6	17·9
Wales	14·0	32·9	7·8	2·4	11·4	3·6	12·2
England and Wales	21·1	36·7	11·3	7·3	16·4	8·3	17·6

[1] Based upon under 50 persons sentenced.

Table 2
Proportion of persons aged 21 and over sentenced at all courts for indictable offences given immediate custody. England and Wales 1987

	Violence against the person	Burglary	Theft and handling	Fraud and forgery	Criminal damage	Drug offences	Indictable motoring
Avon and Somerset	15·0	36·0	9·0	14·9	5·1	10·0	14·2
Bedfordshire	24·5	47·0	12·2	23·1	[1]14·8	23·2	16·1
Cambridgeshire	15·1	45·6	12·1	19·7	18·1	30·3	13·0
Cheshire	21·9	49·2	17·0	16·0	14·8	23·5	13·2
Cleveland	16·1	35·6	8·5	9·6	26·6	6·6	12·5
Cumbria	12·0	47·3	10·0	9·8	17·3	7·4	7·9
Derbyshire	25·4	50·1	12·7	20·6	12·5	32·3	19·9
Devon and Cornwall	20·8	41·6	11·7	15·9	21·1	11·3	1·5
Dorset	14·2	31·9	9·7	15·5	[1]21·3	15·5	10·1
Durham	17·4	45·9	11·3	19·6	[1]20·8	25·0	13·7
Essex	25·9	45·6	12·9	15·7	24·1	25·3	16·2
Gloucester	15·2	29·3	7·0	13·3	17·5	17·5	13·9
Greater Manchester	24·2	43·9	13·5	20·0	16·7	26·1	17·2
Hampshire	19·4	34·5	9·0	16·4	13·3	20·9	13·1
Hertfordshire	23·3	38·2	11·1	14·4	[1]22·9	16·8	7·8
Humberside	20·1	38·3	9·5	15·3	17·0	38·0	13·6
Kent	22·3	42·4	14·0	18·3	25·3	32·9	14·5
Lancashire	19·2	38·6	12·9	14·3	14·5	14·1	13·7
Leicestershire	19·2	42·1	10·7	22·4	13·6	14·8	9·9
Lincolnshire	12·7	43·1	8·1	10·2	[1]19·0	[1]14·3	10·0
City of London	16·2	46·0	25·0	20·9	[1]0·0	[1]7·1	[1]6·3
Merseyside	23·6	52·1	15·1	19·2	17·0	30·9	18·7
Metropolitan Police	23·4	45·3	15·7	20·0	17·8	32·8	18·9
Norfolk	20·6	39·5	12·9	18·0	18·2	18·2	9·6
Northamptonshire	25·0	47·7	12·6	13·0	18·1	32·1	7·2
Northumbria	21·3	38·8	10·2	14·8	12·7	19·9	16·5
North Yorkshire	16·4	41·8	11·9	20·0	12·0	1·0	14·4

	Violence against the person	Burglary	Theft and handling	Fraud and forgery	Criminal damage	Drug offences	Indictable motoring
Nottinghamshire	16·7	41·3	10·2	16·0	13·2	26·0	12·6
South Yorkshire	17·2	37·2	8·7	20·8	19·5	29·0	19·6
Staffordshire	13·0	39·3	9·8	17·4	15·4	10·4	10·7
Suffolk	16·3	34·6	10·6	16·7	14·1	17·8	7·5
Surrey	14·6	42·3	11·9	12·0	12·1	11·3	10·6
Sussex	19·9	41·7	12·2	20·5	19·0	30·8	12·1
Thames Valley	22·7	40·7	13·0	18·8	14·2	21·7	13·2
Warwickshire	28·3	43·9	13·5	16·4	[1]5·3	[1]8·9	11·5
West Mercia	17·3	40·2	10·8	17·4	21·5	13·9	13·5
West Midlands	27·8	44·2	13·5	18·0	24·2	19·6	18·6
West Yorkshire	22·0	41·7	11·8	20·8	12·0	11·5	18·8
Wiltshire	17·4	38·8	8·9	15·3	18·5	7·3	6·3
Dyfed Powys	10·4	38·7	6·2	11·9	4·2	11·2	5·1
Gwent	12·4	37·3	6·9	7·9	15·7	10·3	14·4
North Wales	14·8	53·6	7·9	17·9	8·6	8·3	10·7
South Wales	21·1	30·7	7·8	8·9	17·5	13·1	10·3
England	20·9	42·3	12·6	17·9	16·9	25·3	15·0
Wales	16·5	37·6	7·5	10·7	12·2	11·6	10·5
England and Wales	20·6	42·0	12·2	17·5	16·5	24·6	14·7

[1] Based upon fewer than 50 persons sentenced.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children under the age of 18 years who have been reported missing in the Metropolitan police district and are still missing after 28 days, have not now been found; and what are their sex and ages and their last known whereabouts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The available information is given in the following table. The number of persons reported as missing in the past and still missing depends on the length of time since the report. Many people return from having been reported missing after two or three years. Hence the higher figures for 1986 and 1987 do not indicate an increase in trend.

Children aged under 18 reported missing in the Metropolitan police district and still untraced: by sex

Number

Year reported missing	Total	Male	Female
1983	4	0	4
1984	20	6	14
1985	30	18	12
1986	60	37	23
1987[1]	115	63	52

[1] New counting procedures were introduced from the beginning of 1987: hence the figures for previous years are not comparable.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has consulted European Economic Community countries which operate a national register for missing persons with a view to setting up such a register in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* No. A working party established by the Association of Chief Police Officers is reviewing police procedures for dealing with inquiries relating to missing persons. We will be willing to consider any matters the association may wish to put to us on completion of its review.

Racial Harassment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been in each year since enactment under *(a)* the Public Order Act and *(b)* the Malicious Communications Act for offences relating to racial harassment.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 21 December 1988]:* The information available centrally, which may be incomplete, shows six prosecutions in 1987 under part III of the Public Order Act 1986 relating to acts intended or likely to stir up racial hatred. No information is yet available for 1988 or on the use of the Malicious Communications Act 1988, which did not come into force until September 1988.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which person or body, under the terms of the treaty of Rome is the final determinant of what constitutes an internal frontier in the context of article 8A of that treaty; and whether any such determination has been made or is under consideration.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Court of Justice is the final arbiter on questions of interpretation of the treaty of Rome. We are not aware of any determination being made in the terms suggested.

MacBride Principles

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the states in the United States of America about legislation based on the MacBride principles; in how many of those states the legislation was subsequently enacted; in how many is such legislation pending or being passed between one or other of the two Houses; and if he will list the states in those categories.

Mrs. Chalker: Our representatives in the United States are in touch with state legislatures about possible legislation based on the MacBride principles. Since 1985, legislation has been passed in 10 states—Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan,

Minnesota, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island—and defeated in six. Of the five states which enacted MacBride Bills in 1988, four passed Bills which were significantly amended in their passage through state legislatures. In no state is legislation pending or between houses.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will state in the *Official Report* the representations he has made to the United States of America concerning the investment of funds in companies which do not follow the MacBride principles in Northern Ireland; and in which cities.

Mrs. Chalker: We have consistently opposed the campaign based on the MacBride principles because it could adversely affect investment and the creation of new jobs in Northern Ireland. Our representatives in the United States have been in touch with local legislators where MacBride legislation has been in prospect. The United States Government oppose the imposition of the MacBride principles on United States companies operating in Northern Ireland.

Citizenship

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding comparisons between citizenship, nationality and rights of abode of the people of Macao and people living in Hong Kong; and what response he has made.

Mr. Eggar: No representations have been received. No direct comparisons can be made, as historical and constitutional factors in the two cases are reflected in different national practices and legislation, as my noble Friend the Minister of State made clear at a press conference in Hong Kong yesterday.

ENERGY

British Coal (Subsidence)

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those recommendations from the report of the subsidence compensation review committee (Waddilove) which have now been implemented by British Coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Actions taken or undertakings given by British Coal to implement fully or in part recommendations made by the Waddilove committee are set out below (references in square brackets are to recommendations in the Waddilove report):

PREDICTION AND PREVENTION

Prediction

British Coal carries out detailed geological investigation where necessary [186(i)] and require their areas to give special attention to locations that are sensitive because of the possible environmental or social consequences of surface damage [186(iii)]. British Coal will also endeavour before mining begins to produce the best predictions possible, of the likely effect of subsidence damage on drainage systems in low-lying agricultural land. These predictions will serve as the basis for discussions with the farming community and water authorities on the scope for preventive and remedial work [186(iv)].

British Coal introduced additional measures in 1984 to ensure that subsidence costs are fully and consistently assessed and are included in the costing of proposed underground workings. Areas are expected to modify layouts or take prevention measures in order to reduce the likelihood of severe damage [186(v),(vi)].

The corporation now normally seeks discussion with planning authorities and other interested parties on the likely environmental effects of British Coal's proposals before submitting planning applications for the development of new mines [187(ix)].

Preventive and Precautionary Work

British Coal assesses systematically the scope for, and costs of, preventive measures, especially for larger buildings, when considering future mining plans. The corporation is willing to explain the scope and limitations of such measures at public meetings following the publication of the annual notice about future working [188(x)].

NOTIFICATION AND PUBLICITY

Mining Intentions

British Coal now provides each planning authority in coal-mining areas with a copy of the annual press notice and a plan (revised annually) showing the areas of coal likely to be worked over the next 12 months. The corporation is willing to discuss this information with local authority associations [189(ii)].

If requested to do so by more than one interested body, British Coal will set up a technical liaison committee to discuss their plans. The corporation will also co-operate with local subsidence liaison committees established by residents [189 (iii)].

Mining Inquiries

Agreement has virtually been reached with the Law Society for a standard inquiry search form for use in England and Wales. In responding to the new form, the corporation will, once the new system is fully established, indicate whether there is a current claim outstanding and how many others were settled during the previous five years [191 (viii)]. The corporation and the Law Society of Scotland have agreed to draw up a standard inquiry form for use in Scotland.

THE REPAIR OF SUBSIDENCE DAMAGE

British Coal operates in accordance with the Waddilove recommendation that the board's primary duty should be to repair damages and to make payment in lieu only in exceptional circumstances [192 (i), 193 (ix)]. The corporation's commitment to provide a good standard of repair in all cases already goes a long way towards meeting the recommendation that damaged property should be restored to its pre-damaged condition so far as is practicable [192 (iii)].

It is now British Coal's practice to prepare a fully costed and itemised schedule of repairs for each case of subsidence damage for which they accept liability. Claimants are able to choose who should carry out repairs to their damaged property and land [193 (iv)]. Independent adjudication is available for straightforward disagreements over the initial schedule of works and costs. Wherever practical the completed repairs will be subject to final inspection jointly with the claimant, the claimant's agent or both [193 (v)].

Where British Coal decide to buy a property because the only realistic course of action is to demolish it, they will pay the full market value of the property as if the damage for which they had accepted liability had not occurred. After demolition of the property, the site will be kept tidy to minimise dereliction. Independent adjudication will be considered where there is a dispute over the purchase price [193 (x)].

Interim Repairs

Areas are required to make good damage with appropriate interim repairs if there are sufficient periods of stability between two mining operations, and will endeavour to ensure that property will not be left in a damaged state for long periods. Areas are required to send an explanatory letter to a claimant to whom a stop notice is issued indicating a likely timetable for final repairs [194 (xi)].

Temporary Accommodation

British Coal seeks to ensure that temporary accommodation is both suitable and acceptable to claimants who have had to leave their homes [195 (xii)] and accept responsibility for property vacated during repairs [195 (xiii)].

Assistance to Claimants

British Coal provides that any payment for specialist advice should be paid direct to claimants [196 (xv)].

SCOPE OF COMPENSATION PROVISION

British Coal already exercises its discretion to reimburse claimants for reasonable expenses incurred in pursuing claims. This will be made statutory [198 (1)].

British Coal will continue to treat claimants with consideration so as to minimise distress [199 (ii)]. It will consider payments for loss of home amenity to the small minority of claimants who experience exceptional inconvenience and disturbance during repairs [200 (iii)].

British Coal's Brown Book spells out the criteria governing the Board's decision to purchase property. Independent adjudication on valuation is available [201 (v)].

Discussions between British Coal and the Building Societies Association have taken place on how to deal with the losses to a society which might arise from subsidence [201 (vi)].

British Coal seeks to minimise the effects of subsidence damage on small businesses by, for example, carrying out additional interim repairs or by providing temporary alternative accommodation [202 (vii)].

British Coal is prepared to compensate for diminution in the agricultural land value of the balance of a holding which has been affected by subsidence [202 (viii)].

British Coal pays a commuted sum to public authorities to meet any increased maintenance and running costs following repairs [202 (ix)].

RESOLVING DISPUTES

When British Coal writes to claimants, it always encloses the Department of Energy's leaflet on claimant's rights and its own Brown Book, both of which refer to the possibility of local independent arbitration [203 (1)]. British Coal will recommend the use of independent arbitration in appropriate cases [204 (iv)].

Contributions to Claimant's Costs

In relatively minor cases, where an unsuccessful applicant to the Lands Tribunal has not acted unreasonably, British Coal will seek only nominal costs and may consider forgoing costs if it appeals from a decision of the Lands Tribunal to the Court of Appeal for the purpose of resolving a point of law of general importance [205 (vi)].

FRAMEWORK OF CONTROL, MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

The corporation has prepared a statement of its policy on repair and compensation for subsidence damage [208 (iii)]. It has also issued guidance to all areas on the circumstances in which the corporation would consider making discretionary payments [208 (iv)].

The corporation's audit committee is responsible for audit monitoring the handling by areas of subsidence claims. It is independent of the areas and reports to a corporation member [208 (v)]. British Coal has set up a computerised management information system which is beginning to build up data on trends in subsidence claims and costs. Where practicable, the corporation has incorporated historic data from the areas which will assist the corporation to monitor effectively and compare trends within the areas [209 (vii), 209 (viii)].

British Coal fully accepts the need to be as flexible as possible on the deployment of staff. It has increased staff numbers and employed numerous outside specialists [209 (ix)].

The corporation has now provided the Secretary of State with its first annual report on the administration of its repair and compensation system, and this has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses [208 (vi)].

CEGB (Land Holdings)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the total land holdings of the Central Electricity Generating Board at the latest available date for each region of England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the CEGB, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

ENVIRONMENT

County Structure Plans

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish a White Paper in the future of county structure plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend hopes to do so shortly.

Water Authorities (Chairmen)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the criteria used in paying any annual bonuses to chairmen of the water authorities in 1987-88; and if he will list any bonuses paid to each of the chairmen in 1987-88.

Mr. Ridley: Bonuses in respect of the financial year 1987-88 are payable to the chairmen and executive members of those water authorities which have achieved or exceeded the performance targets set for them by the Government. The bonuses paid to date to chairmen in respect of 1987-88 have been as follows:

Bonus received by the chairmen as a per cent. of his annual salary

Water authority	*Per cent.*
Northumbrian	15
North West	6·5
Severn-Trent	9
Southern	7·5
Wessex	7
Yorkshire	13

Rating Reform

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the poll tax which will be levelled in each of the districts of Derbyshire *(a)* in 1990 and *(b)* in 1991, at current prices.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. I refer to my reply of 19 December to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), at column 41, regarding future community charge levels. The level of the charges will depend on authorities' decisions as to their level of spending.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table showing the relationship of rates and community charge to net household income on an equivalent basis as in the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), 25 January, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The table updating figures F5 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) is as follows. The basis for adjustment to equivalent income figures is provided in paragraph F14 of the Green Paper.

These figures show that for all ranges of equivalent income, except those between £100 and £200 per week, community charges are on average less than domestic rates after allowing for rebates, and form a lower proportion of income.

Relationship of rates and community charge with no safety nets (England), to net household income in each band of equivalent net income (pounds per week, 1988-89 prices)

	Under 75	75-100	100-150	150-200	200-250	250-300	300-350	350-400	400-500	500+	All
Domestic Rates											
Gross £ pw	7·14	7·33	8·11	9·01	9·74	10·19	11·18	12·11	13·43	14·74	8·76
Net £ pw	2·28	3·77	6·80	8·91	9·71	10·19	11·18	12·09	13·42	14·74	7·36
Community Charge											
Gross £ pw	8·05	7·84	8·64	9·53	9·29	8·56	8·74	8·37	8·28	7·86	8·66
Net £ pw	2·05	3·57	6·98	9·18	9·09	8·44	8·66	8·28	8·14	7·82	6·86

As a percentage of net income in each equivalent income band

Per cent.

	Under 75	75-100	100-150	150-200	200-250	250-300	300-350	350-400	400-500	500+	All
Domestic Rates											
Gross	9·2	7·9	5·6	4·1	3·7	3·5	3·2	3·2	3·0	2·3	4·6
Net	2·9	4·1	4·7	4·1	3·7	3·5	3·2	3·2	3·0	2·3	3·8
Community Charge											
Gross	10·4	8·5	6·0	4·3	3·5	2·9	2·5	2·2	1·9	1·2	4·5
Net	2·7	3·8	4·8	4·2	3·5	2·9	2·5	2·2	1·8	1·2	3·6

Football Clubs (Identity Scheme)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking, in accordance with paragraph 1.5 of the document, "Releasing Enterprise" (Cm. 512) to obtain a compliance cost assessment in respect of his plans for control of spectators at designated football matches.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* The Football Spectators Bill, which will be introduced in the House of Lords shortly, will give statutory backing to a national membership scheme for football spectators. It will be for the Football Membership Authority (FMA), which, subject to the will of Parliament, will be appointed by the Secretary of State, to draw up the detailed scheme. We hope that the Football Association and the Football League will establish a joint body to form the FMA. A compliance cost assessment will be undertaken at the appropriate time.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has commissioned into the hooliganism linked with football from the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research; and what were its conclusions.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* My Department and the Football Trust funded an investigation into the measures used by seven Football League clubs to improve spectator behaviour. A summary of the research findings and recommendations was published last July. No further research has been commissioned.

Local Authorities (Economic Development)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 21 December, what will be the form of, and time scale for, the consultation with local authorities and others on the subject of local authority economic development initiatives.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* As I indicated in my reply of 21 December, at columns *266-67*, there will be consultation at the appropriate time with the local authority associations and other interested bodies on the regulations relating to the new power for local authority economic development.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 21 December to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), if he will make a statement on the boundaries between local authorities and the other organisations in the context of local authority economic development.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Local authorities, voluntary organisations and private enterprise all have a role to play in local economic development. The local authorities' role is primarily to stimulate the local economy by preparing the way for effective initiatives by voluntary bodies and the private sector.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) of 21 December on local authority economic development initiatives, what is his policy on the provision of funds specifically designed to facilitate the work of organisations that have incurred a deficit in their initial operational activity where direct assistance or rent and rate free periods are designed to ensure their future commercial viability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* We do not favour an open-ended commitment to pay grant where the size of the grant is related to a deficit which has not yet been determined. A grant of a specific amount of money towards an initial deficit may, depending on circumstances, be appropriate.

Thames Water Authority

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Thames water authority listing all land currently held, and all land that has been bought and sold since 1979 and who the vendors and buyers were and at what price.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Information on the land holdings of all the regional water

authorities is being gathered as part of the preparations for flotation. Figures for receipts from sale of fixed assets are given in the published annual accounts of water authorities. I have no plans to seek additional information in respect of past transactions.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the water rates for the Thames water authority for each year since 1979; and what was the rate of return on capital.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* The information requested is presented in the following tables. The rate of return on capital represents the current cost operating profit as a percentage of the mean current cost net asset values for that year. The figures for the rate of return on capital for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not available on this basis.

Thames Water Authority average water rate

	£
1979-80	38·62
1980-81	47·82
1981-82	54·47
1982-83	60·77
1983-84	66·74
1984-85	73·41
1985-86	80·75
1986-87	83·09
1987-88	87·74
1988-89	92·83

Source: Department of the Environment charges returns

Thames Water Authority rate of return on capital

	Per cent.
1979-80	n/a
1980-81	n/a
1981-82	0·57
1982-83	0·88
1983-84	0·90
1984-85	1·13
1985-86	1·68
1986-87	1·80
1987-88	1·80
1988-89	[1]1·85

[1] Target rate of return
Source: Water authority accounts

Planning Applications (Animal Welfare)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether animal welfare is a criterion relevant to the consideration of planning applications under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Whether the welfare of animals is a material consideration for planning decision will depend upon the circumstances of a particular development proposal.

Severn-Trent Water Authority

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to call in the planning application made by Severn-Trent water authority to convert its site at Dosthill, Tamworth, into a waste disposal landfill site.

Mr. Chope: This application has not yet been referred to the Secretary of State, but, on the information currently before him, it does not appear to raise issues which warrant his intervention.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the net surplus or deficit on the national insurance fund for each year since 1977 *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding Treasury contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

(£ million)

	National Insurance Fund surplus/deficit (1)	*Treasury Supplement (2) contribution to National Insurance Fund*	*(1)-(2)*
1977-78	678	1,537	−859
1978-79	265	1,976	−1,711
1979-80	535	2,343	−1,808
1980-81	412	2,848	−2,436
1981-82	−991	2,433	−3,424
1982-83	−23	2,591	−2,614
1983-84	580	2,807	−2,227
1984-85	374	2,597	−2,223
1985-86	315	2,163	−1,848
1986-87	414	2,412	−1,998
1987-88	1,581	2,135	−554
[1]1988-89	2,646	[1]1,623	1,023
[1]1989-90	519	Nil	519

[1] Estimates published in the Government Actuary's Report on the Uprating and Rerating Orders Cm. 537.

Disability Alliance (Report)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration his Department has given to the report from the Disability Alliance entitled "Hard to Claim, Impossible to Live On", a copy of which has been sent to the Minister with responsibility for the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We shall consider carefully all comments we receive about benefits for people with disabilities, including the Disability Alliance's recent report about severe disablement allowance, when we are examining the findings of the surveys undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response is being made to the letter sent to the Minister with responsibility for the disabled on 20 December 1988 by the Disability Alliance in regard to the severe disablement allowance; if he will place copies of the correspondence in the Library; and if there is any action he will be taking.

Mr. Scott: I have replied to the Disability Alliance and have noted its comments on severe disablement allowance and its proposals for change. I have sent a copy of my reply to the right hon. Member. My response to the Disability Alliance makes it clear that we do not have any plans for major changes to the structure of severe disablement

allowance or other benefits for the disabled pending our consideration of the reports on the surveys of the disabled undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether dependants of Her Majesty's forces personnel can claim severe disablement allowance while they are overseas.

Mr. Scott: Her Majesty's forces dependants who have qualified for severe disablement allowance can normally continue to receive it when they go overseas. Unless helped by the EC regulations, however, they cannot make an initial claim for this benefit when abroad. We propose to introduce a provision to remove the bar on claiming overseas for this category of persons.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Income and Allowances

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. and right hon. Members have sources of income other than their parliamentary salaries.

Mr. Wakeham: I would refer the hon. Member to the Register of Members' Interests.

HEALTH

Environmental Controls

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has any plans to devolve funds for all types of environmental controls to the district and regional health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Environmental controls are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family practitioners in England have facilities for breast screening for cancer.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for providing breast cancer screening services lies with regional health authorities in England. This service is being set up over the three years to 1990. At least one breast screening centre has been established in each region and plans for extending the service to cover all districts are well advanced.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family practitioners in England have a computerised call/recall system for cervical cancer.

Mr. Freeman: All family practitioner committes have a computerised call and recall system which is used to offer a service to all eligible women between the ages of 20 and 64 inclusive.

White Paper (NHS)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has yet decided upon the date for the release of the White Paper on the future of the National Health Service; and if he will give that date.

Mr. Mellor: We shall be publishing a White Paper shortly.

Rehabilitation Hostels

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been underclaimed by the city of Nottingham in grants and benefits from his Department for the occupants of its rehabilitation hostels since the enactment of the National Health Service Act 1977; how much of the arrears have so far been paid; and how much more will be made available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

We are not aware of any arrears owed in respect of these claimants.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been under claimed by the London borough of Greenwich in grants and benefits from his Department for the occupants of its rehabilitation hostels since the enactment of the National Health Service Act 1977; how much of the arrears have so far been paid; and how much more will be made available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

Details of claims and payments of Supplementary Benefit and Income Support are kept in individual clerical records. The information requested concerning this group of claimants could not be obtained without disproportionate expense.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Irish Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1976

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General in how many cases application has been made for the Irish Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1976 to be employed in the Republic of Ireland.

The Attorney-General: Prosecution under the provisions of the extraterritorial legislation depends upon evidence being available to the prosecuting authority in the jurisdiction where the alleged offender is found. It does not depend upon any application being made by the prosecuting authority of another jurisdiction. Evidence and information with regard to alleged or suspected offenders may be and is communicated either to the Commissioner of the Gardai in the Republic of Ireland or to the prosecuting authority in the Republic of Ireland for such action as the prosecuting authority in the Republic considers appropriate.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employment training managers have been approved (i) nationally and (ii) in Oxfordshire.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* None so far. The first awards of approved training manager status are expected to be made in mid-1990.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether he has any plans to introduce

procedures to ensure the quality control of training agents, with particular reference to initial action plans for trainees;

(2) what levels of performance are expected in determining whether an organisation qualifies as a training manager, under the Training Agency, in respect of *(a)* staff policies and practices, *(b)* premises and equipment, *(c)* equal opportunities policy, *(d)* financial viability, *(e)* managing action plans, *(f)* training, *(g)* effective programme review programmes, *(h)* assessment, recording of progress and achievement and use of vocational qualifications and *(i)* health and safety policy.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Information on the levels of performance expected from training managers under the headings requested has been published by the Training Agency. Copies of the criteria for both training agents and training managers have been placed in the library.

The Training Agency is currently working with each training agent to agree proposals to help develop their performance, including work on action plans.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to publish details of the type of training being provided by training managers and agents.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* Information on the numbers of trainees undergoing training on project-based places and on placements with employers should be available in January. Other than this information, my right hon. Friend has no plans at present to publish further details of the type of training being provided by training managers. Training agents do not provide training.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Citizenship

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Portugal or within the Council of Ministers regarding harmonisation of the citizenship and nationality arrangements for people in dependent territories of each member country of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Schools (Statistics)

10. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will detail, at primary and secondary level, the number of *(a)* Church of England, *(b)* Roman Catholic, *(c)* non-denominational and *(d)* independent schools in the Province; how many children attend them; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: These categories are not entirely applicable to Northern Ireland. However, some 46 per cent. of all schools in Northern Ireland, providing for approximately 48 per cent. of all pupils, are under Roman Catholic management. The great majority of the remaining schools are under the management of the education and library boards. Statutorily grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland are open to pupils of all religious denominations or none.

Health Service Staff (Regrading)

11. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation in Northern Ireland of the new grading structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Mr. Needham: The clinical grading criteria recommended by the Nurses Pay Review Body and fully accepted by the Government have been implemented by health and social services boards.

Nurses have sought the introduction of clinical grading for some time and its implementation is a substantial achievement. Those groups with the highest levels of clinical skills and responsibilities have, as was always intended, gone into the higher grades in largest numbers and have therefore received the highest average pay increases. But all staff groups have received a substantial pay rise.

Variable Beef Premium

12. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has put forward to compensate farmers for their loss of income caused by the cessation of the variable beef premium on 31 December.

Mr. Viggers: This is a matter affecting beef farmers throughout the United Kingdom and negotiations with the European Community are handled by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. The Government are opposed to termination of the beef variable premium unless acceptable terms for the replacement premiums are available.

Negotiations on reform of the EC beef support arrangements are continuing. It has been decided to extend the existing support arrangements, including the beef variable premium, until 5 March 1989.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

13. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made in the review of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: Work on the review of the workings of the Intergovernmental Conference is continuing. I invited interested parties and individuals to submit their views on the workings of the conference by the end of 1988. A number of contributions have been received and these are being considered. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has confirmed, the House will also have an opportunity to express its views.

20. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: The most recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference took place in Belfast on 14 December 1988. A copy of the joint statement issued after the meeting, which lists the subjects discussed, has been placed in the Library. As I told the House earlier this

afternoon, a review of the workings of the Intergovernmental Conference is currently in progress as provided under article 11 of the agreement. The House will have an opportunity to express its views before the review is completed.

15. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference took place; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Tom King: The last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference took place on 14 December 1988. A copy of the joint statement issued after the meeting, which lists the subjects discussed, has been placed in the Library.

Security

16. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of deaths caused by terrorist action in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

23. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis).

Short Brothers

17. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the chairman of Short Brothers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend and I have met the chairman of Shorts on a number of occasions. I last met him this morning.

Privatisation

18. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for the sale of Harland and Wolf and Shorts plc.

Mr. Viggers: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

US Government (Financial Aid)

19. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions the United States Government have paid money over to Her Majesty's Government to be spent in Northern Ireland in the past 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: None, However, the United States Government have made three contributions, totalling £120 million, to the International Fund for Ireland. The fund is independent of the Government.

Unemployment

21. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The past two years have seen a significant reduction in unemployment in Northern Ireland. By November 1988, the latest date for which unemployment figures are available, seasonally adjusted unemployment had fallen in 21 of the last 25 months. The Government welcome the improvements that have occurred and continue to give a high priority to reducing the level of unemployment.

Planning Appeals

22. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to give objectors a right of appeal against the granting of planning permission.

Mr. Needham: No.

Harland and Wolff

70. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next meet trade union representatives from Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I have no immediate plans for a further meeting with trade union representatives from Harland and Wolff. I last met representatives of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions on 31 October 1988, when we exchanged views on the future of the company, and I have since written to the confederation in response to a paper which the representatives left with me. A copy of this response has been placed in the Library.

71. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to secure new orders for Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The Government believe that the best prospects for Harland and Wolff lie in its return to the private sector and they are not willing to permit the company to enter into new contracts until future arrangements for the yard are resolved.

Extradition

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he plans to hold further discussions with his Republic of Ireland counterparts within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, on questions affecting extradition, in-country prosecutions and related matters.

Mr. Tom King: All matters which affect Anglo-Irish relations, including extradition and extraterritorial prosecutions, are discussed, as appropriate, under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Life Sentence Review Boards

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to review the procedures of the life sentence review boards for prisoners in Northern Ireland who are serving indeterminate sentences.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The procedures for reviewing life sentences are kept under continuous review, but there are no immediate plans to make changes of major significance in a system which has resulted in release dates for over 100 prisoners.

RUC (Caution)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the caution to be issued to suspects arrested by the Royal Ulster Constabulary under the terms of the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 10 January 1989]*: On 30 November I issued to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary a document entitled "Guidance to the Chief Constable on the Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1988". The guidance contains, inter alia, the new forms of caution to be used by the RUC in circumstances where the provisions of articles 3, 5 or 6 of the order apply.

The guidance comes into effect on 15 December 1988. I have placed a copy of it in the Library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13 January 1989

WALES

National Curriculum

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to accommodate history in Wales within the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am establishing a History Committee for Wales (HCW) to advise me on the overall curriculum for history in Welsh schools. The history committee will work within the broad framework to be devised by the history working group which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has announced today.

The HCW will take account of the working group's recommendations, and will report to me by April 1990 on the attainment targets and programmes of study for history in Wales. I expect the committee to give weight to the essential core of British history which should be common to all children in England and Wales, as well as covering the history of Wales. The committee will be chaired by Professor Robert Rees Davies, professor of history at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. I will announce the rest of the committee's membership shortly.

Terms of reference of the committee are as follows:

Backgound

1. The Education Reform Act 1988 provides for the establishment of a National Curriculum of core and other foundation subjects for pupils of compulsory school age in England and Wales. The Act empowers the Secretary of State to specify, as he considers appropriate for each foundation subject, including history, that there should be clear objectives —attainment targets—for the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the ages 7, 11, 14 and 16; and to promote them, programmes of study describing the content, skills and processes which need to be covered during each key stage of compulsory eduction. Taken together, the attainment targets and programmes of study will provide the basis for assessing a pupil's performance, in relation both to expected attainment and to the next steps needed for the pupil's development.

2. Both the objectives (attainment targets) and means of achieving them (programmes of study) should leave scope for teachers to use their professional talents and skills to develop their own schemes of work, within a statutory framework which is known to all. *It is the task of the Working Group on History to advise on that framework for history.*

3. *The History Committee for Wales* is asked to liaise closely with the History Working Group and to submit preliminary advice to the Secretary of State by 10 June 1989 outlining:—

i. the contents of Welsh history which should be incorporated into the history curriculum in Wales;

ii. its preliminary views on the extent to which Welsh perspectives should influence the wider study of history.

4. By April 1990 the History Committee for Wales is to submit to the Secretary of State a final report setting out and justifying a balanced and complete curriculum for history in Wales, in the light of the final recommendations of the History Working Group.

Approach

5. In carrying out its task the Committee should consult informally and selectively with relevant interests and have regard to:—

i. the terms of reference, supplementary guidance, ongoing work and Interim and Final Reports of the History Working Group;

ii. the broad framework for assessment and testing announced by the Government on 7 June 1988 and subsequent development of it in the light of advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council;

iii. the contributions which history can make to learning about other subjects and cross-curricular themes, and which they in turn can make to learning in history; and

iv. best practice and the results of any relevant research and development.

M4 (Tenders)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979 those sections of the M4 for which tenders have been invited specifying the sections and the actual dates.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1979 tenders have been invited for major works on sections of the M4 in Wales as follows:

Year	*Section of M4 motorway*	*Title*	*Date tenders invited*
1980	Coldra to Tredegar Park junctions 24-28	Widening to 3 lanes	7 January 1980
1981	Newhouse to Coldra junctions 22-24	Installation of communications cable	27 July 1981
1981	Lonlas to Pont Abraham junctions 44-49	Renewal of traffic signs	8 September 1981
1985	Newhouse to Coldra junctions 22-24	Television surveillance system	18 February 1985
1985	Newhouse to Coldra junctions 22-24	Major resurfacing	14 March 1985
1985	Miskin to Pencoed junctions 34-35	Resurfacing	1 June 1985
1986	Castleton and Llandarcy junctions 29-43	Advance direction signing	1 August 1986
1987	Pontardulais bypass junctions 44-48	Surface dressing	10 March 1987
1987	Newhouse to Pont Abraham junctions 22-49	Signalling and communications maintenance	29 June 1987

National Parks

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the percentages of planning applications were, in each of the Welsh national parks, which were *(a)* allowed, *(b)* dismissed, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* undetermined for each of the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Planning applications
Planning activity within the Welsh National Parks

percentage

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Brecon Beacons National Park					
Allowed	70·1	63·7	62·6	54·2	54·2
Dismissed	11·2	13·8	15·2	16·7	16·2
Withdrawn	2·8	4·2	2·6	5·3	3·4
Undetermined	15·9	18·3	19·5	23·8	26·2
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park					
Allowed	67·8	76·1	73·8	75·2	76·1
Dismissed	9·1	7·3	8·9	6·6	12·6
Withdrawn	1·2	1·5	1·1	1·5	2·8
Undetermined	21·9	15·1	16·2	16·7	8·5
Snowdonia National Park					
Allowed	65·7	59·0	60·5	n/a	n/a
Dismissed	8·6	12·8	14·3	n/a	n/a
Withdrawn	2·8	6·9	6·8	n/a	n/a
Undetermined	22·8	21·2	18·3	n/a	n/a

The "undetermined" column gives a "snapshot" figure of those applications awaiting decision at the end of March in each financial year.

Figures for the latest two years are not compatible with earlier years, because the definition of "planning applications" used on the WOPS1 and WOPS2 general development control forms has been widened.

Roads

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether a line of route and a date for commencement of work have been agreed for the proposed Robeston Wathen, Pembrokeshire, by-pass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A route for this scheme has not yet been agreed. Information on its timing will be included in the forthcoming edition of "Roads in Wales".

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the next edition of "Roads in Wales."

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Before the end of the current financial year.

Water Act 1973

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since the coming into force of the Water Act 1973 disputes have been submitted to him for determination under the provisions of section 11(4) of that Act; and if he will specify the local authority area in which such disputes have risen.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since the coming into force of the Water Act 1973 he has issued directions under the provisions of section 4(10) of that Act to the National Water Council; and what was the purpose of each such direction.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since the coming into force of the Water Act 1973 he has issued directions under the provisions of section 17(5) of that Act to water authorities; and for which estuary each such direction was made.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since the coming into force of the Water Act 1973 he has issued directions under the provisions of section 5(1) of that Act to water authorities; and for what purpose each such direction was made.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since the coming into force of the Water Act 1973 he has issued directions under the provisions of section 5(2) of that Act to water authorities; and for what purpose each such direction was made.

Mr. Grist: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Channel 5

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received recent representations from the Scottish Trades Union Congress regarding the location of main offices for Channel 5; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No representations have been received. Paragraph 6.21 of the Government White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s" proposes that Channel 5 licences should be national in their scope. It would be for licencees to decide where to locate their headquarters.

Viraj Mendis

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that no action will be taken to deport Viraj Mendis before his Department replies to solicitors' letters dated 21 and 30 December 1988 concerning the changed situation in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if there is intention to take any

action against Mr. Viraj Mendis in Manchester before all domestic legal remedies have been applied; and if he will make a statement:

(2) if it is his intention to reply to the two letters from Mr. Viraj Mendis concerning the situation in Sri Lanka, dated 21 and 30 December 1988 respectively, before any action is taken against him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The decision to deport Mr. Mendis has been reviewed and endorsed by the independent appellate authorities, the Divisional Court and the Court of Appeal. His petition for leave to move to the House of Lords has also been rejected. On 28 December, the court rejected a subsequent application for judicial review of my right hon. Friend's refusal to give assurances to his solicitors, first, that no steps would be taken to remove Mr. Mendis pending a substantive response to their representations and, secondly, that no steps would be taken to remove him for at least 48 hours following notification of the response.

We are further considering the representations received from Mr. Mendis' solicitors.

New Year Celebrations (Arrests)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests were made in the Trafalgar square area during new year's eve and new year's day; how many police and members of the public were injured; and what was the estimated size of the gathering.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a total of 120 arrests were made during the new year celebrations in Trafalgar square. Eleven police officers were injured and 148 injuries to members of the public were reported, of whom 64 were taken to hospital. It is estimated that around 65,000 people were present.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests were made during new year celebrations on drunk and disorderly grounds in England and Wales; and how many police officers were injured.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Reading Rock Festivals

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests were made at the 1987 and 1988 Reading rock festivals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police that the number of arrests was 146 and 178 respectively.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act since 1 January 1988 have been *(a)* allowed and *(b)* refused legal representation during questioning.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what communications he has had with the European Court of Justice concerning the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Hurd: None.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act since 1 December 1988; what areas of the United Kingdom and other countries they were from; for what period they were held before being charged; and how many were subsequently charged.

Mr. Hurd: Information on the operation of the prevention of terrorism legislation is compiled quarterly and published in Home Office statistical bulletins at the end of the month following the quarter covered, or as soon as possible thereafter. I will reply to the hon. Member when the statistics for the fourth quarter of 1988 have been published.

Independent Television Commission

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the Independent Television Commission will have a statutory duty *(a)* to draw up a code governing standards and practice of advertising and prescribing the advertisements and methods of advertisements to be prohibited and *(b)* to secure compliance with the code;

(2) whether the Independent Television Commission will be required to draw up television programme guidelines on (i) expression of opinion by programme companies, (ii) legal matters, (iii) promotion and presentation, (iv) sponsorship and indirect advertising, (v) competition and reward shows, (vi) charitable appeals and publicity for charities and (vii) communication with the public;

(3) whether the Independent Television Commission will be required to draw up television programme guidelines on *(a)* decency and the portrayal of violence, *(b)* feature films, *(c)* technical quality, *(d)* accuracy, *(e)* privacy and gathering of information, *(f)* fairness and impartiality, *(g)* party politics, politicians and programmes and *(h)* crime, anti-social behaviour, etc.

Mr. Renton: The general responsibility of the proposed Independent Television Commission for oversight of programme content, advertising and sponsorship was described in paragraph 5 of annex A to the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (November 1988, Cm. 517). We will bring forward draft legislation in the light of the comments that we have invited on the White Paper.

Ashford Remand Centre

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the nature and extent of catering and canteen services provision at Ashford remand centre; by whom such provision is made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 16 December 1988]*: As my right hon. Friend announced last March, Ashford remand centre has been reopened on a temporary basis to enable prisoners to be moved from police cells.

Because of a shortage of trained prison officer caterers, catering for inmates is being provided by a contractor, Sutcliffe Catering South-East, whose contract requires it to provide meals to the standards and dietary scales laid down for the prison service as a whole.

In the light of experience at the two temporary camps closed recently, the inmates canteen is being operated by the NAAFI; the range of stocks is based on those held in other prison canteens.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his plans for establishing the complete national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are establishing forthwith a working group to make recommendations on attainment targets and programmes of study for history within the national curriculum in England and Wales.

The working group's terms of reference are set out in the table. I have also sent supplementary guidance to the group's chairman, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. We are grateful to Commander Saunders Watson, until recently the president of the Historic Houses Association, and currently the chairman of the Heritage Education Trust, for agreeing to chair the history working group. The other members are:

Mr R M Guyver, Wembury primary school, Plymouth;
Mr J Hendy, Director of Education, Stockport;
Mr H Hobhouse, author;
Mr P Livsey, adviser in history and geography, county Durham;
Mrs A Low-Beer, Bristol university;
Dr A Prochaska, secretary and librarian, Institute of Historical Research;
Dr J M Roberts, Merton college, Oxford university;
Mrs C White, Garth Hill comprehensive school, Bracknell;
and Dr G Elwyn Jones of University College, Swansea, who will also be a member of the History Committee for Wales announced today by my right hon. Friend.

The group will begin work at once. It will give interim advice by 30 June 1989 and final advice by Christmas 1989. This will enable attainment targets and programmes of study in history to begin to be introduced in schools from the autumn of 1991.

Our outline timetable for the development as appropriate of attainment targets, programmes of study and guidelines in other foundation subjects, and for their implementation in schools, is as follows:

Geography: working group to be established, Easter 1989; implementation to begin in schools—autumn 1991.

Modern foreign languages: working group to be established, July 1989; implementation to begin in schools—autumn 1992 at the latest.

Music, art and physical education: arrangements set up for considering the content of guidelines—June 1990; implementation in schools—autumn 1992.

This timetable will secure that either agreed requirements, or proposals, relating to the full national curriculum are publicly availalbe by mid-1991.

National Curriculum Working Group on History: Terms of Reference

Background

1. The Education Reform Act 1988 provides for the establishment of a National Curriculum of core and other foundation subjects for pupils of compulsory school age in England and Wales. The Act empowers the Secretary of State to specify, as he considers appropriate for each foundation subject, including history, that there should be clear objectives—attainment targets—for the knowledge, skills, and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16; and to promote them, programmes of study describing the content, skills and processes which need to be covered during each key stage of compulsory education. Taken together, the attainment targets and programmes of study will provide the basis for assessing a pupil's performance, in relation both to expected attainment and to the next steps needed for the pupil's development.

2. Both the objectives (attainment targets) and means of achieving them (programmes of study) should leave scope for teachers to use their professional talents and skills to develop their own schemes of work, within a statutory framework which is known to all. *It is the task of the Working Group on History to advise on that framework for history.*

The Task

3. The Working Group is asked to submit an interim report to the Secretaries of State by 30 June 1989 outlining and, as far as possible, exemplifying:

(i) the contribution which history should make to the overall school curriculum and how that will inform the Group's thinking about attainment targets and programmes of study;

(ii) its provisional thinking about the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have attained and be able to demonstrate at key ages; and the profile components into which attainment targets should be grouped;

(iii) its thinking about the programmes of study which would be consistent with the attainment targets provisionally identified; and

(iv) the key elements within those programmes of study that it considers to be essential at each key stage for children throughout England and Wales, bearing in mind the need for a balanced history curriculum for all pupils and, in Wales, the need to allow room within that curriculum for appropriate attention to the history of Wales.

4. By Christmas 1989 the Working Group is to submit a final report to the Secretaries of State setting out and justifying its final recommendations on attainment targets and the programmes of study for history.

Approach

5. In carrying out its task the Group should consult informally and selectively with relevant interests and have regard to the work of other subject groups, in particular those on English, Welsh and, in due course, on geography. Additionally the Group should take account of:

(i) the broad framework for assessment and testing announced by the Government on 7 June 1988 and subsequent development of it in the light of advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council;

(ii) the contributions which history can make to learning about other subjects and cross-curricular themes, and which they in turn can make to learning in history;

(iii) best practice and the results of any relevant research and development;

(iv) the work of the History Committee for Wales (HCW); and

(v) the issues covered in the supplementary guidance to the Group's Chairman.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Pets

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is his policy towards the admittance of pets to the House of Commons.

Mr. Wakeham: Only pets belonging to residents are permitted in the House of Commons area of the Palace of Westminster.

In the House of Commons outbuildings, pets are permitted provided that they are kept under proper control and cause no nuisance.

United States Congress (Publications)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will take steps to arrange for United States Congressional publications to be made available to hon. Members on the same conditions as United Nations publications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. Right hon. and hon. Members may apply for United Nations publications on a green demand form because Her Majesty's Stationery Office acts as an agent for this international body. HMSO does not act as an agent for United States congressional publications, nor for any other overseas national body.

As the hon. Member will be aware, microfiche copies of the congressional record are held in the Library and printouts of selected passages from these are available on request.

Satellite Television

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) whether it is his intention to purchase a satellite dish for the Houses of Parliament to receive Sky Channel satellite television;

(2) whether a room will be provided for hon. Members to view Sky Channel satellite television after 5 February 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no such plans at present. The provision of facilities for the reception and viewing of satellite television programmes has not yet been considered by the relevant Committees of each House. Any request for such consideration should be addressed to the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Ministers (Contracts)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to introduce a contract of employment for Government Ministers.

The Prime Minister: No.

H Cabinet Committee

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what the H Cabinet Committee has discussed and what decisions have been reached during the last 12 months; and what decisions have been reached by the H Cabinet Committee in respect of Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The proceedings of Cabinet committees are confidential.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will describe the workings of the H Cabinet Committee.

The Prime Minister: No.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister what increase there has been in the number of nurses and midwives in the National Health Service in the United Kingdom since September 1978.

The Prime Minister: Between September 1978 and September 1987 the total number of nursing and midwifery staff in the United Kingdom has increased by 69,900 wholetime equivalents (16 per cent.).

British Coal (Legal Dispute)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will instruct the relevant Ministers to use their powers to direct British Coal and the South of Scotland Electricity Board not to use public funds to fight a case in the courts and instead to impose a single arbitrator on them whose decision shall be final.

The Prime Minister: Contractual negotiations between electricity generating boards and their fuel suppliers are a matter for their commercial judgment. It would not be appropriate for Government Ministers to intervene.

Department of Social Security Benefit Offices

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister how many visits she has made to local Department of Social Security benefit offices since 1979.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 15 April at column 245.

Homeless People

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she intends to visit those who now sleep on the streets in London and other major cities and towns.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Visits

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what considerations are taken into account in deciding whether she should make visits when no invitations as such have been made.

The Prime Minister: All relevant factors are taken into account when deciding which visits I should undertake.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions her Office has made representations to the media that no publicity should occur when she intends to make visits other than strictly personal engagements; and if she will give details accordingly.

The Prime Minister: My Office makes arrangements for the media as appropriate.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy on visiting those in hospital who have been injured in major accidents and tragedies; and whether she has made representations to the broadcasting authorities and newspaper that her visits should be made in private.

The Prime Minister: I make a practice of visiting those who have been involved in major accidents and tragedies whenever my programme permits. Arrangements made for the media take into account the views of the hospital authorities and the patients.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Clinical Grading

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing, midwifery and health visting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in each Northern Ireland health board.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 January 1989]* The information requested is set out in the following tables which show the position at 31 October 1988. While the numbers and grades are continually changing this is the most up to date information held centrally. The numbers shown on scale G include posts which have been identified but which may not yet have been filled by competition.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff—movement from old grades to new grades
Eastern health and social services board
Movement to new grades

Title	*WTE[1] staff in post at 31 October 1988*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Assistant	317·27	315·27	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nursing Auxiliary	1,096·25	1,051·18	45·07	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	11·00	6·00	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	1,205·81	—	—	641·70	546·91	17·2	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Dist Train	19·31	—	—	—	19·31	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	42·73	—	—	7·00	28·73	6·00	1·00	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	2,972·40	—	—	—	808·39	2,117·31	37·70	9·00	—	—
Staff Midwife	337·80	—	—	—	11·00	323·05	3·75	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	25·28	—	—	—	—	—	24·28	1·00	—	—
Sister II	789·69	—	—	—	—	—	182·78	591·91	15·00	—
Sister II Midwife	147·76	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	139·76	3·00	—
District Nurse Sister II	189·61	—	—	—	—	—	—	188·61	1·00	—
Sister I	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	1·00	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	198·82	—	—	—	—	—	—	196·82	2·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	60·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28·00	32·00
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	5·00
Senior Nurse 7	70·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	64·00
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00
Fieldwork Teacher/Health Visitor	24·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	24·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	23·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23·00	—
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	28·00	—	—	28·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	219·00	—	—	—	217·00	2·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	7,795·73	1,372·45	52·07	676·70	1,631·34	2,465·56	254·51	1,129·10	107·00	107·00

[1] Includes Blood Transfusion and Occupational Health Services Staff.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff—movement from old grades to new grades
Southern health and social services board
Movement to new grades

Title	*WTE staff in post at 31 October 1988*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Assistant	4·10	4·10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nursing Auxiliary	523·85	515·17	8·68	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	1·00	—	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	510·91	—	—	382·60	128·31	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Dist Train	4·00	—	—	—	4·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	14·00	—	—	—	4·00	10·00	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	743·81	—	—	—	133·32	604·65	5·84	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	174·34	—	—	—	9·00	165·34	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	23·32	—	—	—	—	23·32	—	—	—	—
Sister II	224·75	—	—	—	—	—	79·75	142·00	3·00	—
Sister II Midwife	47·35	—	—	—	—	—	16·35	31·00	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	99·83	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	98·83	—	—
Sister I	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	—	—
Sister I Midwife	11·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·00	—	—
Health Visitor	85·29	—	—	—	—	—	—	84·29	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	11·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·00	—
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 7	37·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19·00	18·00
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	1·00
Fieldwork Teacher/Health Visitor	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	—

Post Basic Students

Title	WTE staff in post at 31 October 1988	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Enrolled	13·00	—	—	13·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	16·00	—	—	—	14·00	2·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	2,569·55	519·27	9·68	395·60	292·63	805·31	102·94	369·12	56·00	19·00

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff—movement from old grades to new grades
Northern health and social services board
Movement to new grades

Title	WTE staff in post at 31 October 1988	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Assistant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nursing Auxiliary	391·34	380·44	10·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	0·80	—	0·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	606·79	—	—	424·36	180·77	1·66	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Dist Train	13·56	—	—	—	13·56	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	3·00	—	—	—	1·00	2·00	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	737·46	—	—	—	195·84	495·35	46·27	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	114·87	—	—	—	—	107·57	7·30	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	12·71	—	—	—	—	12·71	—	—	—	—
Sister II	189·05	—	—	—	—	—	73·45	112·60	3·00	—
Sister II Midwife	14·00	—	—	—	—	—	7·00	7·00	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	129·95	—	—	—	—	—	—	128·95	1·00	—
Sister I	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	1·00	—	—
Sister I Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	99·71	—	—	—	—	—	—	99·71	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	25·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25·00	—
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	1·00
Senior Nurse 7	30·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	28·00
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9·00
Fieldwork Teacher/Health Visitor	8·63	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·63	—
Practical Work Teacher	7·75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·75	—
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	14·00	—	—	14·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	16·00	—	—	—	8·00	8·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	2,428·62	380·44	11·70	438·36	399·17	627·29	135·02	349·26	49·38	38·00

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff—movement from old grades to new grades
Western health and social services board
Movement to new grades

Title	WTE staff in post at 31 October 1988	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Assistant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nursing Auxiliary	414·75	405·25	9·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff (NNEB)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	351·65	—	—	328·55	23·10	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Dist Train	2·00	—	—	—	2·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled	7·43	—	—	—	7·00	0·43	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	914·09	—	—	—	179·00	723·09	—	12·00	—	—
Staff Midwife	152·00	—	—	—	16·00	136·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	17·00	—	—	—	—	13·00	4·00	—	—	—
Sister II	243·50	—	—	—	—	1·00	93·50	145·00	2·00	2·00
Sister II Midwife	47·00	—	—	—	—	—	13·00	34·00	—	—
District Nurse Sister II	98·46	—	—	—	—	—	—	94·46	4·00	—
Sister I	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	—	—
Sister I Midwife	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—	—
Health Visitor	68·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	66·50	2·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	1·00
Senior Nurse 8 Midwife	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	1·00
Senior Nurse 7	39·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	37·00
Senior Nurse 7 Midwife	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00
Fieldwork Teacher/Health Visitor	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	—

Title	*WTE staff in post at 31 October 1988*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	30·00	—	—	—	15·00	15·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	2,407·38	405·25	9·50	328·55	242·10	888·52	110·50	358·96	19·00	45·00

Fair Employment Agency

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions the Department of Economic Development has exercised its powers under the Fair Employment Act to require the Fair Employment Agency to supply to his Department information in the agency's possession.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 12 January 1989]:* The information cannot be provided without disproportionate cost to the Department.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in the past 10 years, how many certificates the Secretary of State has issued under section 42 of the Fair Employment Act 1976.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 12 January 1989]:* Eighteen certificates have been issued by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1988.

Employment Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employers in Northern Ireland have currently (i) under 10 employees, (ii) between 10 and 25, (iii) between 25 and 250 and (iv) over 250 employees.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 12 January 1989]:* At September 1988 approximately 1,140 employers in Northern Ireland employed between 25 and 250 employees and 170 employed more than 250. Information on the number of employers with fewer than 25 employees is not currently available.

Teaching Qualifications

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of qualifications to teach which can be obtained in Northern Ireland which will be fully recognised by education authorities in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

Such qualifications are not automatically acceptable for qualified teacher status in England and Wales, individual applications from teachers trained in Northern Ireland fall to be considered by my right hon. Friend under paragraph 2*(b)* of schedule 5 to the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982. Applications are accepted where the course of initial teacher training was comparable to an approved course of initial teacher training for school teachers available in England or Wales at the same time. Qualifications leading to registration as a teacher in Scotland are those recognised by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make the necessary arrangements whereby automatic recognition of teachers qualified to teach and recognised as such in Northern Ireland will occur in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

I expect shortly to announce details of the proposed reform of qualified teacher status which was the subject of a consultation document issued by my Department in May 1988. When implemented, teachers qualified to teach and recognised as such in Northern Ireland will be eligible for qualified teacher status in England and Wales. Eligibility to teach in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Scottish Consumer Council (Report)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the report made for his Department by the Scottish Consumer Council on the public consultation and decision-making processes associated with forestry development and seabed leases, upon which they consulted Scottish local authorities in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No such report was made for my Department, although I understand that the Scottish Consumer Council has independently produced a report on how various authorities and organisations thought that communities should be consulted about changes in their local environment and the development of the seabed.

Computers (Japan)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what responsibilities have been undertaken by his Department in the agreement made with authorities in Japan concerned with the Japanese fifth generation computer project.

Mr. Forth: The Department has informed interested companies that the Institute for New Generation Computer Technology (ICOT) has agreed to accept up to two United Kingdom researchers from industry on secondment. Any secondee must be nominated by the Department and be acceptable to ICOT.

Newspapers

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications have been made to acquire newspapers under the terms of the Fair Trading Act 1973 since July 1977; and how many such applications have been refused.

Mr. Maude: Since July 1977 decisions have been taken on 60 applications; 58 consents have been given and, of these, two were given conditionally. Three applications are currently being considered by my Department and one other is with the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

A number of applications have also been received which have been withdrawn before any final decision has been taken. Details of these cases since 1977 are not available.

European Community Structural Funds

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report* the occasions when discussions have taken place in the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community covering the future of its structural funds, the relevant reports made by him to the House, and the likely future timetable of further discussions prior to final adoption of each legislative instrument.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* The Foreign Affairs Council discussed the future of the structural fund on the dates listed. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs reported to the House on those meetings on the dates shown:

Council meetings	*Reports to the House*	*Official Report column numbers*
23 to 24 November 1987	25 November 1987	222-224
14 to 15 December 1987	16 December 1987	575
25 January 1988	27 January 1988	240
24 to 25 May 1988	26 May 1988	239-240
13 to 14 June 1988	16 June 1988	217-218
26 September 1988	19 October 1988	876-879
	25 October 1988	158-159
24 to 25 October 1988	27 October 1988	411
21 to 22 November 1988	24 November 1988	11
19 December 1988	21 December 1988	274

In addition, the European Council discussed the subject on 4 to 5 December 1987 and 11 to 12 February 1988. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported to the House on those meetings on 8 December 1987 and 15 February 1988 at columns 167-178 and 705-717.

Debates on Community documents about the reform of the funds were held on 18 November 1987 and 21 December 1988 at columns 1090-1162 and 549-570. They were opened by, respectively, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and me.

Five legislative instruments have now been adopted, and entered into force on 1 January 1989

Council regulation (EC) No. 2052/88 of 24 June 1988

Council regulations (EEC) (not yet numbered) adopted in December 1988 laying down provisions for implementing regulations (EEC) No. 2052/88 as regards:

- coordination of the activities of the different structural funds between themselves and with the operations of the EIB and the other financial instruments,
- the European regional development fund,
- the European social fund,
- the EAGGF guidance section.

No further general legislative instruments on the funds are in prospect, but article 10 of the new regulation on the EAGGF provides that the Council is to decide by 31 December 1989 on the forms of and conditions for the fund contribution to improve the conditions under which agriculture, forestry and fishing products are processed and marketed. The necessary Commission proposals for this have not yet been made.

ENERGY

Neighbourhood Energy Action

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how he proposes to continue support for neighbourhood energy action; and if he expects to reverse the recent decline in the number of local projects;

(2) how many neighbourhood energy action projects were running in September 1988; how many are running now; and what has been the impact on such energy projects as a result of the change from the community programme to the employment training scheme.

Mr. Parkinson: There were some 440 community insulation projects operating on 1 September; on 1 December there were about 300. These numbers are, however, not directly comparable because the transition from community programme to employment training involved a number of projects merging or reforming.

Uptake of places for unemployed people on the projects has been slow under employment training. My Department is therefore in discussion with the Training Agency on initiatives to increase the number of filled places.

Energy Conservation

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what advice is given to housing authorities whose tenants have lost the benefits provided by the former Manpower Services Commission schemes on providing draught-proofing and other energy conservation measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: My energy efficiency office provides a range of advice on how housing authorities can improve the energy efficiency of their dwellings.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make representations to the Soviet authorities making it a condition of the United Kingdom's support for the proposal of a human rights conference in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1989 that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics make a full statement on the fate of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg;

(2) if he will make it his policy to raise the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg at the proposed human rights conference in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will seek to obtain from the Government of the United States such information as is in their possession about Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has of the occasions when the Government of the United States of America raised the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he proposes to raise further the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg at the CSCE; and if he will make a statement;

(6) if he will make further representations to the Government of Sweden offering assistance from Her Majesty's Government in Sweden's efforts to obtain a full statement from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics about the fate of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement;

(7) if he will make representations to the Swedish Government to request that their official publications about Mr. Raoul Wallenberg are translated into the English language; and if he will make a statement.

(8) if he will seek to obtain the hearings and reports from United States House of Representatives on House joint resolution 220 of the 97th Congress, session one; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We fully share the concerns of the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and the Minister of State my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave). will writing shortly.

Nerve Gas

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the capability of Libya to manufacture sarin nerve gas.

Mr. Eggar: We have firm evidence that the Rabta plant is close to achieving the capability to produce chemical weapon agents including sarin.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent international conference on chemical weapons in Paris.

Mr. Eggar: We played an active part in this conference to which the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), led the United Kingdom delegation.

We particularly welcome the concluding conference declaration which was adopted by consensus by all 149 States participating. It specifically recognises the important and continuing validity of the 1925 Geneva protocol and contains an undertaking by all not to use CW. It also expresses support for the Geneva negotiations for a global ban on CW, and the role of the UN Secretary-General in investigating allegations of use.

The successful outcome of the conference represents a considerable step forward in international efforts to eliminate chemical weapons. We now have to build on this.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Pensioners Alliance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will *(a)* authorise the repayment of the £35,000 immediately to the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance and *(b)* compensate the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance for the outlay it made between receiving the payable order and sending a cheque when asked for its repayment; and why he originally sent this organisation a payable order for £35,000 in respect of funds accrued from the underpayment of Civil Service pensions due to a miscalculation in the retail prices index and then asked for the £35,000 to be refunded.

Mr. Luce: My officials will authorise payment of £35,000 awarded to the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance (CPSA) from the RPI error funds as soon as Parliament approves a supplementary estimate for the funds.

My officials have written to the general secretary of the CPSA to explain and apologise for the delay. The withdrawn payable order was issued in the (mistaken) belief that funds could be authorised in advance of parliamentary approval of a supplementary estimate. I regret the disappointment and inconvenience this may have caused, but I cannot compensate the CPSA for the delay.

HEALTH

Salmonella

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what inquiries have been made to ensure that salmonella pollution has been eliminated in each country exporting food to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Salmonella contamination is recognised as a world-wide problem and the EC Standing Veterinary Committee decided on 7 December 1988 to set up a working group to consider the problem with the European Community.

The Imported Food Regulations 1984 together with the Food Act 1984 give the responsible authorities adequate powers to prevent the importation of contaminated food into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the level of salmonella infection in current British egg production.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the replies by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H Miller) on 20 December at columns *246* and *247* respectively.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of *(a)* outbreaks of salmonella attributable to poultry meat and poultry meat products, *(b)* people affected in each such outbreak and *(c)* fatal cases in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of outbreaks of salmonella associated with poultry meat and poultry meat products formally reported to the public health laboratory service in the years 1979-88 are as follows:

England and Wales

Year	*Number of outbreaks*
1979	[1]55
1980	119
1981	84
1982	49
1983	45
1984	36
1985	21
1986	[2]29

Year	Number of outbreaks
1987	[2]41
1988	[2]34

[1] laboratory reports only.
[2] provisional data.

Information on the numbers of people affected in each outbreak is not readily obtainable.
Some information is available on the number of deaths from salmonella bacteraemia formally reported to the public health laboratory service as follows:

Reports of Salmonella Bacteraemias (England and Wales)

Year	Total Salmonella Bacteraemias (Excluding S Typhi/Paratyphi) Deaths	S Enteritidis Bacteraemia	
		Phage Type 4 Deaths	Other Deaths
1983	30	2	3
1984	33	—	3
1985	30	3	2
1986	21	4	1
1987	35	9	6
1988 (to week 43)	48	23	3

Early information is not readily available.
There is no direct evidence to link these deaths with the consumption of poultry, but salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 is associated almost exclusively with poultry and eggs and we must assume that some of the deaths shown in the phage type 4 column will have been associated with poultry.

Water Pollution (Camelford)

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in providing a small group of independent experts to advise the local health authority on the health consequences of the water pollution in the Camelford area of north Cornwall.

Mr. Freeman: Professor Dame Barbara Clayton from Southampton university medical school, Professor G. A. Rose of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Professor J. A. Edwardson of the MRC neurochemical pathology unit, Newcastle, and Professor R. F. Packham from the Water Research Centre and Imperial college, London, have agreed to form an expert advisory group. I am most grateful to Dame Barbara Clayton, who will chair the advisory group, and the other members for undertaking this task at such short notice.

The group, to be known as the Lowermoor incident health advisory group, will advise the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly district health authority on the implications for the health of the population in the Camelford area following the contamination of their drinking water in July 1988. They will start work as soon as possible, and their report will be available to Ministers and made public.

South Western Regional Health Authority

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of Wednesday 14 December, *Official Report*, column *606*, if he will list those private customers other than health authorities within the south-west region to whom fees have been charged for the use of the region's computer centre and the design service in each of the last three years; and what percentage of the total cost of the region's computer centre and design service in each year each represents.

Mr. Mellor: The regional design service has provided services almost entirely for district health authorities in South Western region.

The regional computer centre's sources of income for 1987-88 are shown in the table. In previous years, the amount of income from sources other than districts in south western region were not significant and records were not kept. Details of the centre's customers and of payments made are matters of commercial confidentiality.

1987-88 Income

	per cent.
Districts in South Western region	84·7
Private sector	4·0
Other NHS regions/districts	6·8
Other state funded systems	4·5

Doctors (Working Hours)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state, or estimate, the number of junior hospital doctors in England and Wales and Scotland who are currently contracted to work in excess of 84 hours and 100 hours, respectively, in the course of a working week.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 September 1987, 12,689 junior hospital doctors in England and Wales were contracted to work or be on call for 89 hours or more in the course of a working week. Included in that figure were 2,528 doctors who were contracted to work or be on call in excess of 100 hours. The information relating to Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

In 1985, an independent survey showed that junior doctors actually worked an average of 57 hours a week.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ascertain the number of cases in coroners courts where a contributory cause of death has been found to be tiredness or length of duty of hospital doctors in each of the years 1985-88.

Mr. Mellor: Junior doctors' rotas are determined locally. I would expect local health authorities to investigate fully any case where a coroner's court were to find that a contributory cause of death was one of the factors described by the hon. Member.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secrertary of State for Health what is the average number of hours in any one week required to be worked by a doctor who is working a one in three rota, as envisaged in his letter of recommendation of June 1988 EL(88)P.82 and the likely range of hours worked in any one week.

Mr. Mellor: A doctor who is working a one in three rota will be contracted to work and to be on call on average for a total of 84 hours in a week. The likely range of hours worked in any one week are dictated by local circumstances. They will depend on a number of circumstances including whether the practitioner is contracted for weekend duty in that week. The likely range would be between 40 and 104 hours. Actual weekly hours worked by junior doctors have, on average, fallen from 58·3 to 57 between 1981 and 1985.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the maximum number of hours that can be worked by a junior hospital doctor within a seven-day period and the maximum number of hours that may be worked continuously within the terms of his current recommendations.

Mr. Mellor: We attach great importance to the reduction in hours worked by some junior hospital doctors. Health authorities have been asked to eliminate wherever possible rota commitments worse than one night and one weekend in three. The actual number of hours worked will vary depending upon the speciality and local circumstances.

Locum Doctors

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the reduction in the number of available locum doctors, consequent to his request to district health authorities of 25 November 1988, concerning their terms of employment and remuneration.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities were advised of the maximum rate they should pay to agencies supplying locum doctors for work in hospitals from 12 December 1988. We have no evidence that the advice has led to any significant reduction in the number of available agency locums; but we are consulting widely on guidance to be issued to health authorities on their employment.

AIDS

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how may Irish citizens are receiving AIDS treatment in the United Kingdom; and what information he has as to why they are not taking this treatment in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Mellor: Such information is not held centrally.

Cigarettes

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give an estimate of the number of cigarettes sold illegally to children, and their estimated current value; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The best available source of information on illegal sales of cigarettes to children comes from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys biennial study of smoking among secondary school children. From the 1986 study it can be estimated that children aged 11 to 15 in England and Wales smoked some 880 million cigarettes costing £66 million at a retail price of £1·50 per pack of 20. Not all of these cigarettes will have been sold illegally as some will have been obtained from other people aged over 16. However, in addition children who did not smoke also reported buying cigarettes and therefore it seems likely that total illegal sales are in excess of the estimates given above. We regard this failure to comply with the law as a serious matter and we are considering how the law might be better enforced. The Tobacco Advisory Council is currently engaged in a campaign to raise awareness of the law and to encourage its observance.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish any evidence that he has on how consumption of cigarettes, particularly by children, is affected by an increase in price; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Evidence from many studies over a long period shows that an increase in the price of cigarettes reduces consumption, with a 1 per cent. increase in price leading to a reduction in consumption of rather less than 1 per cent. There is no evidence available on the effect of price increases on children's smoking in this country, but a study undertaken in the United States suggests that teenagers' smoking is more responsive to price, with a 1 per cent. increase in price leading to a reduction of more than 1 per cent. in consumption. A list of studies and their principal results is as follows.

Percentage Reduction in Consumption of Cigarettes following a One per cent. Increase in Price

Study	*Data*	*Change in Consumption Following a 1 per cent. Price Increase Percentage*
Sumner (1971)	1955-68 (annual and quarterly)	−0·8
Russell (1973)	1946-71 (annual)	−0·5 to −0·6
Atkinson and Skegg (1973)	1951-70 (annual)	0·0 (men) −0·35 (women)
Peto (1974)	1951-70 (annual)	−0·37 to −0·64 (men)
McGuinness and Cowling (1975)	1957-68 (quarterly)	−0·99 (short run) −1·05 (long run)
Metra (1979)	1958-78 (quarterly)	−0·34 to −0·54 (sr) −0·42 to −0·54 (lr)
Witt and Pass (1981)	1955-75 (annual)	−0·32
Radfar (1985)	1965-80 (quarterly)	−0·23 (sr) −0·39 (lr)
Lewitt, Coate and Grossman (1981)	US teenagers	−1·4

Sources:
C. Godfrey and A. Maynard, "Price, Consumption of Tobacco and the Economic Effects of a Taxation Policy Designed to Reduce Consumption", ESCRC Addiction Centre, University of York, 1987.
J. Townsend, *Tobacco Price and the Smoking Epidemic*, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1988.

Drug Names

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases his Department is aware of where the similarity of some generic drug names have resulted in mistakes with prescriptions.

Mr. Mellor: We do not routinely collect such information. The number of reported serious accidents arising from prescribing mistakes due to apparent confusion over similar names (whether of generic or

proprietary medicinal products) is thought to be extremely low—probably not more than one a year on average. Generic medicines marketed in the United Kingdom must be prescribed by their statutory British approved name. These names are devised having regard, among other factors, to the desirability of avoiding confusing similarity with other generic or proprietary names. Lists of names of medicines which look or sound alike are published from time to time in the medical and pharmaceutical press.

Set-aside Agreements

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many set-aside agreements his Department has finalised by county in England and Wales; what is the total hectarage for each county of same taken out of production by such means; and what is his estimate by county of the total cost of this scheme.

Mr. Freeman: I am not aware of such agreements in respect of agricultural land in the ownership of the NHS in England.

Community Care

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified social workers are required to meet the demand for community care; how many qualified social workers there are; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information is collected centrally only on the number of social workers employed by local authorities. At September 1987 the number in post in England was 24,300. We do not have information available on the number who held a professional qualification. Nor does the information held centrally enable us to identify the number of social workers currently engaged, or likely to be required, on community care work.

Social Work Students

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many students are taking courses leading to the certificate of qualification in social work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work that 4,933 students in England were attending courses leading to the award of the certificate of qualification in social work during the 1987-88 academic year. Of those students, 2,639 had commenced their courses during that year.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many students are taking courses leading to the certificate in social services; what Government help is given to these students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work that 3,401 students in England were participating in schemes leading to the award of the certificate in social services during the 1987-88 academic year. Of those students, 1,325 had joined schemes during that year. These students are staff of local authorities and the costs therefore fall to their employers.

Artificial Colouring

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of children below the age of 16 years who have become ill as a result of artificial colouring in confectionery in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: Information to answer the question is not collected as part of the Department's health statistics system.

Occasionally letters are received in the Department attributing various ill effects in children to consumption of artificial food colouring in confectionery.

British Chicken Bureau

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any prosecutions have been brought against the British Chicken Bureau under section 8 of the Food Act 1984 in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally.

Private Hospice Patients (Drugs)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements exist for patients in non-National Health Service hospices to obtain necessary drugs under the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* General medical practitioners are entitled to prescribe drugs for their patients who have been admitted to independent hospices. This entitlement applies to medical directors of hospices who are also general medical practitioners. In addition, health authorities have discretion to supply drugs to hospices without charge or at reduced rates, or to make financial contributions to the cost of the services they provide. Medical directors of hospices who are also employed by health authorities may, by arrangement with the authorities, prescribe drugs for hospice patients.

We are aware that some hospices find current arrangements insufficiently flexible, and the scope for improvements is under consideration.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make National Health Service central register records available to the Salvation Army for the forwarding of communications to missing persons on behalf of their families or where other efforts to trace them have failed.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The records held on the National Health Service central register are confidential and it is our policy not to disclose them in the way suggested. However, when organisations such as the Salvation Army ask for communications to be forwarded to a missing person, such a request is treated sympathetically in that the communication is usually passed to the relevant family practitioner committee, whose register contains patients' addresses, for onward transmission if they judge it appropriate to do so.

Elderly People (Residential Homes)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by local authority area the number of approved places in: *(a)* private, *(b)* voluntary and *(c)* local authority residential homes for the elderly, for each year since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: The information readily available over the period relates to the number of places for elderly and younger physically handicapped people in local authorities own homes and places registered in private and voluntary homes under the Registered Homes Act 1984. The information for the years ending 31 March 1981 to 1986 is published in "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes Year Ending 31 March 1981 to Year Ending 31 March 1986 England", a copy of which is available in the Library. The provisional information for year ending 31 March 1987 is given in the table.

Number of places in residential care homes for the elderly and for younger physically handicapped people as at 31 March 1987 (Provisional).

Local authority	*Places in local authority homes*	*Places in voluntary homes*[1]	*Places in private homes*[1]	*Total places in all homes*[1]
Northern Region	9,297	1,019	4,531	14,847
Cleveland	1,494	104	367	1,965
Cumbria	1,672	127	1,245	3,044
Durham	1,883	137	560	2,580
Northumberland	852	173	564	1,589
Gateshead	649	52	107	808
Newcastle upon Tyne	886	228	393	1,507
North Tyneside	509	63	738	1,310
South Tyneside	511	10	194	715
Sunderland	841	125	363	1,329
Yorkshire/ Humberside	14,465	1,749	9,854	26,068
Humberside	2,325	187	2,625	5,137
North Humberside	2,004	821	2,893	5,718
Barnsley	698	0	243	941
Doncaster	748	77	345	1,170
Rotheham	677	16	73	766
Sheffield	1,813	44	282	2,139
Bradford	1,425	93	1,418	2,936
Calderdale	702	32	438	1,172
Kirklees	1,163	43	534	1,740
Leeds	2,165	382	709	3,256
Wakefield	745	54	294	1,093
North Western Region	17,347	4,673	15,337	37,357
Cheshire	2,134	775	1,083	3,992
Lancashire	3,985	691	6,768	11,444
Bolton	706	74	405	1,185
Bury	462	392	181	1,035
Manchester	1,842	233	700	2,775
Oldham	671	0	528	1,119
Rochdale	608	0	329	937
Salford	831	201	194	1,226
Stockport	637	36	588	1,261
Tameside	459	83	319	861
Trafford	521	122	613	1,256
Wigan	824	16	216	1,056
Knowsley	222	0	63	285
Liverpool	1,441	719	496	2,656
Sefton	705	1,075	1,816	3,596
St. Helens	316	84	92	492
Wirral	983	172	946	2,101
West Midlands Region	11,768	2,289	9,483	23,540
Hereford and Worcester	1,207	417	2,131	3,755
Shropshire	1,128	31	1,360	2,519
Staffordshire	2,147	370	1,740	4,257
Warwickshire	918	372	885	2,175
Birmingham	2,509	747	1,358	4,614
Coventry	677	45	601	1,323
Dudley	563	42	581	1,186
Sandwell	909	0	158	1,067
Solihull	324	166	82	572
Walsall	697	0	261	958
Wolverhampton	689	99	326	1,114
East Midlands Region	9,210	1,732	6,652	17,594
Derbyshire	2,116	431	1,717	4,264
Leicstershire	2,159	423	1,066	3,648
Lincolnshire	1,437	203	1,778	3,418
Northampton	1,309	337	1,004	2,650
Nottinghamshire	2,189	338	1,087	3,614
Thames/Anglia Region	14,426	5,344	11,791	31,561
Bedfordshire	1,145	172	754	2,071
Berkshire	1,158	635	1,060	2,853
Buckinghamshire	1,029	874	507	2,410
Cambridgeshire	1,378	316	942	2,636
Essex	3,389	1,168	2,565	7,122
Hertfordshire	1,753	826	1,318	3,897
Norfolk	1,896	514	2,738	5,148
Oxfordshire	1,183	340	476	1,999
Suffolk	1,495	499	1,431	3,425
Inner London Region	6,785	2,173	874	9,832
Camden	578	206	71	855
Greenwich	560	0	109	669
Hackney	523	137	0	660
Hammersmith	461	106	16	583
Islington	651	58	32	741
Kensington	300	249	51	600
Lambeth	702	302	172	1,176
Lewisham	790	18	237	1,045
Southwark	682	300	0	982
Tower Hamlets	441	125	0	566
Wandsworth	568	636	186	1,390
Westminster	529	36	0	565
City of London	0	0	0	0
Outer London Region	9,156	4,392	4,655	18,203
Barking	379	0	38	417
Barnet	544	1,003	534	2,081
Bexley	437	5	45	487
Brent	437	159	72	668
Bromley	475	646	330	1,451
Croydon	608	320	698	1,626
Ealing	599	389	302	1,290
Enfield	550	56	354	960
Haringey	457	360	140	957
Harrow	412	134	396	942
Havering	514	0	303	817
Hillingdon	505	96	57	658
Hounslow	473	136	5	614
Kingston upon Thames	253	18	370	641
Merton	262	165	165	592
Newham	616	109	24	749
Redbridge	481	174	231	886
Richmond upon Thames	353	434	85	872
Sutton	338	176	299	813
Waltham Forest	463	12	207	682

Local authority	Places in local authority homes	Places in voluntary homes[1]	Places in private homes[1]	Total places in all homes[1]
Southern Region	13,658	7,759	26,655	48,072
Dorset	1,380	673	4,256	6,309
Hampshire	2,854	962	5,850	9,666
Isle of Wight	316	126	1,253	1,695
Kent	2,807	1,226	2,525	6,558
Surrey	2,016	1,845	1,962	5,823
East Sussex	1,491	1,527	5,465	8,483
West Sussex	1,602	1,135	4,086	6,823
Wiltshire	1,192	265	1,258	2,715
South Western Region	8,077	2,844	16,276	27,197
Avon	2,538	829	2,295	5,662
Cornwall	1,044	251	2,621	3,916
Devon	2,217	1,035	8,929	12,181
Gloucestershire	1,164	480	1,058	2,702
Somerset	1,114	249	1,373	2,736
England Total	114,189	33,974	106,108	254,271

[1]Includes homes exempt from registration under Section 1(5)(j) of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people had their unemployment benefit stopped because they were considered not to be available for work during the period January to October 1988 in *(a)* Burnley; *(b)* Pendle; *(c)* Hyndburn and *(d)* Rossendale and Darwen.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that information is not available in respect of the specific localities requested. Statistics on adjudication officers' decisions are not kept below sector level; Blackburn sector adjudication office covers the area specified, in addition to others. Nor do records differentiate between availability decisions reached during the currency of a claim and those that start before any benefit has been paid.

Transitional Payments

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why transitional payments due to Mrs. Rhoda Thompson of 17 Manton avenue, Whinney Banks, Middlesbrough, have not been paid since 31 October 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There was a delay in sending out one payment to Mrs. Thompson. This delay was due to an error on the computer disc which contained the payment details. The error has been rectified and all payments due have been issued.

Industrial Injuries Scheme

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will be involved in the changes of the payment of benefit from the special hardship allowances under the industrial injuries scheme to the new reduced earnings allowance included in the Social Security Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Social Security Act 1988 introduced a new benefit—retirement allowance—to replace reduced earnings allowance (formerly known as special hardship allowance) for those people of pension age who retire on or after 10 April this year. We estimate that between 4,500 and 5,000 beneficiaries will reach pension age each year, and the change will affect them as and when they retire.

Mr. O' Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in full the views of the people who responded to the consultation paper issued in December 1985 on the proposed changes to the industrial injuries scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not our practice to publish the responses made by individuals or organisations to consultation papers. When we announced the changes proposed following this consultation paper, we reported on the balance of respondents' views on each of the proposals.

Family Credit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families are now receiving family credit; and how many claims are awaiting determination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of December, approximately 255,400 families were receiving family credit. A further 47,800 claims were awaiting determination. Both figures were depressed by a reduction in activity during the latter part of the month.

DEFENCE

Armenia (Relief Supplies)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why Royal Air Force transport aircraft were not made available to facilitate the transportation of relief supplies from the United Kingdom to Armenia following the recent earthquake; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Air Force transport aircraft were available if required, but no formal request for their use was received.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many service men in the armed forces have instituted a complaint of racial discrimination or abuse under *(a)* the Race Relations Act 1976 and *(b)* revelant sections of the Service discipline Acts; and if he will publish the details of such cases;

(2) how many service men in the armed forces have instituted a complaint of racial discrimination or abuse under the grievance procedures provided in the Service discipline Acts; and if he will publish the details of such cases.

Mr. Neubert: Section 75(8) of the Race Relations Act 1976 provides that complaints of racial discrimination made by members of the armed forces shall be dealt with in accordance with the provisions for the redress of complaints set out in the service discipline Acts. Submissions for redress of complaint may be dealt with by commanding officers or at any of the higher levels of command up to, and including, the service boards of the Defence Council.

No central records are kept of the total number of submissions made. However, of submissions considered by the service boards since the Race Relations Act 1976 came into force in 1977, none was concerned with alleged racial discrimination or abuse.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions since the Race Relations Act 1976 became law has the special investigations branch investigated allegations of racial discrimination or abuse; and if he will publish the details of such cases;

(2) on how many occasions since the Race Relations Act 1968 became law have incidences of racial discrimination or abuse, whether actual, reported or alleged, been brought to the attention of the special investigations branch, senior regimental officers or the authorities of his Department; and if he will publish the details of such cases.

Mr. Neubert: Records are not maintained in a form which enables this information to be provided.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what circumstances led the Commission for Racial Equality to make representations to his Department about ways of dealing with racial discrimination; what has been his Department's reponse to these representations; and what arrangements are in force or planned within the armed services to prevent racial abuse or provocation and to improve awareness of dangers of racial discrimination.

Mr. Neubert: My Department has received no recent representations but has had a number of discussions with the Commission for Racial Equality both directly and in the forum of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on Race Relations. The CRE has been helpful, for example, in the drafting of terms of reference for a study by independent consultants following the results of the first year of ethnic monitoring of applicants and recruits to the armed forces. The aim of the study, for which invitations to tender have now been issued, is to attract more young people from the ethnic minorities to careers in the armed forces.

Measures to discourage racial discrimination were set out in the memorandum from the Ministry of Defence to the House of Commons Defence Committee which was published in the First Report from the Defence Committee, Session 1987-88 (HC 391) and I refer the right hon. Member to pages 4 to 9 of that report. More recently instructions have been issued to recruiting staff, further Defence Council instructions have been issued and some 65,000 copies of the leaflet "The Armed Forces—Your Rights and Responsibilities" have been distributed, primarily to recruits. This leaflet sets out in summary form the armed forces' policy of equal opportunity and the procedures for any complaints of injustice or ill-treatment.

Rubble Dumping (Pirbright)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps the Property Services Agency is taking to prevent unauthorised dumping of rubble on Ministry of Defence land in the vicinity of School lane, Pirbright, details of which have been sent to the Department.

Mr. Neubert: I shall write to my right hon. Friend shortly.

Personnel (Duties)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give an estimate (i) as to the numbers of military personnel whose duties include *(a)* part time and *(b)* full time, the care of horses owned privately by officers and (ii) the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Privately owned horses are permitted to be stabled in Army stables only on the basis that there are no additional costs (including manpower costs) to public funds and that their owners meet the costs incurred.

Chieftain Tank Replacement

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, further to his statement on 20 December 1988 on the Chieftain tank replacement, a contract has now been signed with Vickers.

Mr. Sainsbury: Negotiations on the detailed terms and conditions of the contract are in hand and it is hoped that the contract will be signed shortly.

Neutron Beam Detectors

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research is being commissioned in relation to the use of neutron beam detector systems for use in security at Royal Air Force bases; what level of funding is being allocated to this area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: MOD is assisting the Department of Transport in its work aimed at improving airport security. The results of such work could be of benefit to the RAF. I am sure that the hon. Member will appreciate that it would be inadvisable on security grounds to comment on particular technologies.

CINDER (Aldermaston)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will define the role, task and training of CINDER at AWRE, Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement about its composition.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to recent articles in the press about the Government's counter-terrorist arrangements. Contingency plans exist to deal with a number of potential terrorist threats. It would not, however, be in the public interest to discuss specific plans.

SCOTLAND

Teacher Training

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by subject *(a)* the number of students in Scotland currently enrolled on teacher training courses and *(b)* the number of available places on teacher training courses in Scotland for the current academic year and the projected number for the forthcoming academic year; and if he will make a statement on any shortfall in particular subject areas of students enrolling for teacher training courses in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend prescribes the overall number of places to be provided for each teacher training course in the colleges of education, but does not determine limits for subject specialism which may be offered within postgraduate secondary courses. The balance of subject specialisms is determined by individual colleges of education in consultation with their local education authorities.

The information requested is set out in the table below. There is no shortfall in the numbers enrolled for this academic session for the primary courses, the post-graduate secondary courses and the bachelor of education in physical education course. Recruitment to the new bachelor of education courses in music and in technology has not matched the places available. A Government publicity leaflet about technology teaching has been sent to every school and further education college, and I understand that access courses for both degrees are being planned.

	Students enrolled[1] *1988-89*	*Places available 1988-89*	[2] *Provisional places available 1989-90*
Primary			
4-year BEd	2,070 (503 in year 1)	500	850
Postgraduate course	201	200	300
Secondary[3]			
4-year BEd in Physical education	277 (80 in year 1)	80	90
Music[4]	53 (36 in year 1)	55	70
Technology[4]	61 (39 in year 1)	80	80
3-year Diploma in music[5]	14 (year 3)	—	—
4-year Diploma in speech and drama[5]	15 (years 3 and 4)	—	—
Postgraduate course	418	400	600
English	40	—	—
History	13	—	—
Geography	12	—	—
Modern studies	11	—	—
French	20	—	—
German	3	—	—
Gaelic	2	—	—
Computing	25	—	—
Mathematics	61	—	—
Biology	26	—	—
Chemistry	34	—	—
Physics	41	—	—
Art	23	—	—
Business studies	29	—	—
Home economics	18	—	—
Technology	19	—	—
Music	10	—	—
Drama	5	—	—
Religious education	26	—	—

[1] Figures correct at 17 October 1988.
[2] These figures are at present the subject of consultation.
[3] It is also possible to undertake teacher training as part of an undergraduate degree course at the university of Stirling. By agreement with the University Grants Committee, the university is restricted to producing a maximum of 50 secondary teachers annually.
[4] Entry to these courses began in 1987-88.
[5] The final intake to these courses was in 1986-87.

Loch Katrine

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the fluoride levels both natural and artefact of Loch Katrine water; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The natural fluoride content of Loch Katrine water is negligible and remains consistently below 0·05 milligrammes per litre. The water supply authority does not add fluoride.

Health Service (Grading)

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received recent representations from trades unions regarding nurses' regrading in Lothian's National Health Service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received no recent representations from trades unions on this matter.

Football

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list Scottish League clubs together with the following information for each of them during the 1987-88 season: the number of matches played at their grounds, the total season's attendance, the total arrests in association with such matches, the average attendance per match, the average number of arrests per match and the arrests as a proportion of the attendance; and if he will make a statement about the numbers of charges and convictions which have arisen from such arrests.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Attendance figures for season 1987-88 are summarised in the following table. Figures are not collected centrally for European cup ties, friendly matches and regional competitions. The police forces have advised that the total number of arrests within the grounds at these matches was 845. Charges were prepared in all these cases. Information as to whether such charges resulted in criminal convictions is not held centrally.

Attendances at Matches played in Season 1987-88 in the Fine Fare league championship and in the Skol Cup and the Scottish Football Association Cup competitions

	Total attendances	*Number of matches*	*Average attendance per match*
Premier Division			
Aberdeen	349,207	26	13,431
Celtic	796,261	25	31,850
Dundee	259,753	27	9,620
Dundee United	253,278	24	10,553
Dunfermline Athletic	249,271	25	9,970
Falkirk	160,321	23	6,970
Heart of Midlothian	422,443	26	16,247
Hibernian	275,898	26	10,611
Morton	110,432	23	4,801
Motherwell	168,303	26	6,473
Rangers	924,557	24	38,523
St. Mirren	172,148	24	7,172
First Division			
Airdrieonians	37,843	23	1,645
Clyde	24,085	23	1,047
Clydebank	28,794	23	1,251
Dumbarton	34,260	24	1,427
East Fife	23,054	23	1,002
Forfar Athletic	17,600	23	765
Hamilton Academical	55,380	24	2,307
Kilmarnock	48,201	23	2,095
Meadowbank Thistle	19,398	24	808
Partick Thistle	68,385	25	2,735
Queen of the South	32,449	24	1,352
Raith Rovers	63,734	25	2,549
Second Division			
Albion Rovers	7,342	20	367
Alloa	11,393	20	569
Arbroath	17,298	21	823
Ayr United	67,215	21	3,200
Berwick Rangers	9,429	21	449
Brechin City	12,577	21	598
Cowdenbeath	6,617	22	300
East Stirlingshire	10,847	21	516
Montrose	7,988	19	420
Queen's Park	13,613	21	648
St. Johnstone	47,782	22	2,171
Stenhousemuir	7,203	20	360
Stirling Albion	26,945	21	1,283
Stranraer	9,757	20	487
Cup Semi-Final Ties	191,588	6	31,931
Cup Final Ties	140,034	2	70,017
Grand Totals	5,182,701	881	

Community Charge

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the estimated number of second homes liable for the standard community charge by local authority areas.

Mr. Lang: The estimated number of second homes for each district and islands council area as at 30 June 1986 is set out in the following table. The figures have been derived from information supplied by local authorities.

District/Island Authorities	*Second homes*
Berwickshire	184
Ettrick and Lauderdale	257
Roxburgh	313
Tweeddale	200
Clackmannan	37
Falkirk	125
Stirling	162
Annandale and Eskdale	171
Nithsdale	283
Stewartry	478
Wigtown	331
Dunfermline	68
Kirkaldy	126
North East Fife	801
Aberdeen City	312
Banff and Buchan	393
Gordon	355
Kincardine and Deeside	293
Moray	515
Badenoch and Strathspey	565
Caithness	205
Inverness	304
Lochaber	374
Nairn	55
Ross and Cromarty	663
Skye and Lochalsh	527
Sutherland	428
East Lothian	564
Edinburgh City	726
Midlothian	44
West Lothian	44
Argyle and Bute	2,763
Bearsden and Milngavie	3
Clydebank	35
Clydesdale	155
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	27
Cumnock and Doon Valley	38
Cunninghame	1,884
Dumbarton	311
East Kilbride	42
Eastwood	16
Glasgow City	674
Hamilton	51
Inverclyde	84
Kilmarnock and Louden	70
Kyle and Carrick	539
Monklands	65
Motherwell	16
Renfrew	141
Strathkelvin	38
Angus	599
Dundee City	208
Perth and Kinross	994
Orkney	166
Shetland	166
Western Isles	460
SCOTLAND TOTAL	19,446

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been fined for not registering for the poll tax to date; how many people have been placed on the register despite not having registered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for compiling community charges registers rests with individual community charges registration officers and information of the kind requested is not held centrally.

Lockerbie Air Disaster

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the emergency arrangements of British Nuclear Fuels for Chapelcross nuclear power station if the Pan American airliner had crashed there or any part of it had fallen on Chapelcross; what discussions he has had with British Nuclear Fuels following the crash; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: *[holding answer 12 January 1989]:* The emergency arrangements at Chapelcross are prepared by

the operators, British Nuclear Fuels plc, and approved by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate (NII) of the Health and Safety Executive, under the terms of the site licence, on a basis similar to that used at all other civil nuclear power stations in Great Britain. I am advised that the NII regards the probability of a direct strike by an aircraft or significant part of one leading to an uncontrolled release of radiation as extremely low and considers that no change in current emergency arrangements to cater specifically for aircraft crashes would be appropriate.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Co-operatives (Funding)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) *Official Report*, 14 December, column *629*, how much of the funding made available to the Housing Corporation in the next three years he expects to be spent on housing co-ops, showing separately the amount he expects to be spent on tenant management co-ops and transferred ownership co-ops.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not held by the Department. The Housing Corporation is responsible for allocating its capital programme to housing associations, including housing co-operatives, within the broad framework agreed by my right hon. Friend. I have therefore asked the chairman of the Housing Corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct. The hon. Member may care to note that, with effect from April, the Housing Corporation's responsibilities will relate to associations in England only.

Rating Reform

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what is *(a)* the amount and *(b)* the proportion of net income after rebates, adjusted for family size, households' pay in domestic rates in 1988—89, broken down into decile groups; and what is his estimate of what the equivalent figures would be if the community charge was being paid.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The analysis is not available in the form requested.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) on Thursday 12 January 1989, *Official Report*, columns *742-4*. This provides figures by equivalent income bands.

Vocational Skill Training

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange to modify the funding criteria under the urban programme to enable vocational skill training, such as that offered by the Bradford Contact Club, to receive funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No change is required. Schemes to improve the skills and employability of inner city residents are an important part of the urban programme and they will continue to be funded according to the individual merits of each application. Such schemes should be seen as complementary to those administered by the Department of Employment.

Energy Conservation

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice and assistance he offers to housing authorities on energy conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The homes insulation scheme, administered by housing authorities and funded by the DOE, provides 90 per cent. grants for loft insulation in qualifying dwellings where householders are recipients of income support, family credit or housing benefit. A DOE booklet for scheme applicants, distributed to all authorities, includes detailed guidance to those who wish to carry out the work themselves.

Estate Action provides advice and financial assistance to local authorities based on the Department's publication "Energy Efficient Renovation of Housing", and research at the Building Research Establishment. In addition advice is available to housing authorities from BRE through its newly launched technical consultancy and through seminars, workshops and its many publications. These include information papers, defect action sheets and digests as well as reports such as the planned design guides on cavity wall insulation and LPS buildings and the BRE video on the remedies for condensation and mould. Housing authorities can also use BREDEM (BRE's domestic energy model) to evaluate all aspects of energy conservation, including insulation, heating, ventilation and the likely behaviour of householders.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has discussed with any local authorities the possibility of alterations in capital spending restrictions following the establishment of a housing action trust in their area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Section 74 of the Housing Act 1988 provides that any money received by an authority following transfer of property to a HAT will be treated as a capital receipt under whatever capital finance system is in place. I have had no discussions with any local authorities about altering this provision.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had discussions with local authorities other than Leeds, Sunderland, Sandwell, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Lambeth regarding the establishment of housing action trusts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I discuss all kinds of housing issues which authorities choose to raise when I come in contact with them. And I discussed housing action trusts with representatives of the local authority associations at the Housing Consultative Council on 25 November 1988.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to alter the current criteria for establishment of housing action trusts so that higher quality public sector stock can be included in one.

Mr. Trippier: Section 60 of the Housing Act 1988 lists matters to which the Secretary of State may have regard in deciding whether to include a particular area of land in an order designating a housing action trust area. We have no plans to amend this section.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a decision has been reached on the location of the headquarters of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Howard: The great majority of National Rivers Authority staff will be based in the regions where the authority's main activities will take place. But we have concluded that, at least for an initial period, the small central policy unit of not more than 60 people should occupy the same London offices as the National Rivers Authority advisory committee. This will ensure continuity between the advisory committee and the NRA itself in the busy period up to vesting and flotation. Other headquarters support functions of the NRA, such as computers, payroll, and information technology work, will be located in the regions from the establishment of the NRA. We shall keep under review the scope for further regionalisation of these London-based staff.

Home Loss Payments

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make an order to increase the level of home loss payments.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales have today laid before Parliament the Home Loss Payments Order 1989, under which a home loss payment will be 10 times the rateable value of the dwelling concerned subject to a minimum of £1,200 and a maximum of £1,500. The order will come into effect on Monday 16 January.

These changes will result in a substantial increase in the average value of home loss payments: at present the minimum payment is £150 and the multiplier is three times rateable value.

This is an interim provision. Further provision will be necessary as a consequence of the abolition of domestic rateable values on 1 April 1990. My Department and the Welsh Office will shortly be publishing a consultation paper on land compensation issues which will refer to this matter.

Rating Reform

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the average community charge would be if it were in place in 1988-89 for income support claimants.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1988]*: No information is available for income support claimants which enables the hon. Member's question to be answered in the form requested. However, based on data contained in the family expenditure survey and the illustrative community charge figures published on 23 June 1988, I estimate that the average community charge, after rebates, payable by people entitled to income support in England would have been about £1 per week in 1988-89. This assumes that those entitled to claim income support will in fact claim it. This sum would be fully covered by the specific increases in income support to cover community charge payments, which have already been announced.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of places so far filled on employment training schemes in each area manpower board area; what was the target number of places to be filled at this time in each area; and how many of these places in each area were filled by transfers from the community programme.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of filled places in each area manpower board area is not readily available but the following table gives this information for each training agency area office area. I am not able to supply information on the Training Agency's estimated profile of filled places as this figure is for internal management purposes only and is not normally published.

I am afraid that I cannot give reliable information on the number of places in each area filled by those people transferring from the community programme. However, in September and October a national total of about 6,000 people transferred from the community programme to employment training, so the numbers in any area are not likely to be large.

Employment Training: Filled Places by Area Office

Area Office	*Filled Places as at:*			
	30 September 1988	*28 October 1988*	*25 November 1988*	*16 December 1988*
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	223	372	483	563
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	623	853	1,001	1,110
Essex	455	642	772	1,006
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	1,005	1,315	1,523	1,730
Kent	760	1,068	1,365	1,521
Surrey	146	200	267	289
Sussex	587	714	842	928
London Region				
Inner London north	1,280	2,258	3,043	3,484
Inner London south	956	1,268	1,698	1,936
London east	832	1,098	1,421	1,593
London north	897	1,271	1,813	2,100

Area Office	Filled Places as at: 30 September 1988	28 October 1988	25 November 1988	16 December 1988
London south	389	431	614	613
London west	248	431	631	758
South West Region				
Avon	484	642	1,037	1,230
Devon and Cornwall	1,627	2,209	2,939	3,535
Dorset and Somerset	598	876	1,058	1,273
Gloucester and Wiltshire	278	539	708	797
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	1,228	2,086	2,998	3,555
Coventry and Warwickshire	551	838	1,134	1,280
Dudley and Sandwell	926	1,231	1,410	1,589
Staffordshire	769	1,296	1,748	2,051
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	616	980	1,279	1,590
Wolverhampton and Walsall	863	1,263	1,672	1,874
East Midlands and Eastern Region				
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	309	489	835	1,035
Derbyshire	726	1,154	1,520	1,702
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	707	1,015	1,352	1,530
Lincolnshire	428	540	673	802
Norfolk and Suffolk	755	1,188	1,404	1,786
Nottinghamshire	973	1,318	1,785	1,929
Yorkshire and Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	1,400	1,676	2,506	2,925
Humberside	2,016	2,662	3,267	3,542
North Yorkshire and Leeds	907	1,424	2,154	2,474
Sheffield and Rotherham	1,490	2,294	3,024	3,461
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	1,561	2,126	2,913	3,389
North West Region				
Cheshire	850	1,298	1,699	1,958
Cumbria	235	382	600	773
Lancashire	1,465	1,865	2,420	2,773
Central Manchester	1,346	1,809	2,372	2,500
Greater Manchester north	714	1,103	1,469	1,677
Greater Manchester east	848	1,224	1,589	1,747
Merseyside	1,210	2,197	3,264	3,889
Northern Region				
Cleveland	1,520	2,247	2,984	3,444
County Durham	898	1,629	2,259	2,538
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	954	1,130	1,538	2,022
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	1,053	2,063	2,886	3,538
Wales				
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	944	1,518	1,943	2,283
Gwent	198	621	868	1,051
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	436	993	1,251	1,582
Mid and South Glamorgan	735	1,305	1,934	2,351
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	451	700	1,060	1,408
Central and Fife	753	974	1,267	1,567
Glasgow City	836	1,201	1,621	2,052
Grampian and Tayside	739	1,078	1,256	1,409
Highlands and Islands	161	214	287	340
Lanarkshire	406	748	1,104	1,311
Lothian and Borders	490	992	1,558	2,005
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	525	701	942	1,197

Mr. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are being used in assessing the quality of employment training programmes.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 December 1988]*: The criteria used in assessing quality on employment training have been published by the Training Agency in "Achieving Quality—Approved Status Criteria". Copies of the publications for both training managers and training agents have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision has been made for ensuring the quality of placements with employers sub-contracted by training managers.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 December 1988]*: All training managers are required to include provisions in their contracts with sub-contractors which require those sub-contractors to meet satisfactory standards. The criteria which a training manager will have to meet to secure approved status includes a number of requirements in relation to the role of the sub-contractors they use. In addition Training Agency staff have right of access to all employment training providers and officials are already monitoring standards including those of subcontractors.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the total percentage of the economically active population employed, in a part-time capacity, in each sector of the economy, set out by age and gender, for the years 1979, 1983 and the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: Estimates from the 1979, 1983 and 1987 labour force survey of employees in part-time employment as a percentage of the economically active in Great Britain, by industry sector, age and sex, are presented in the following table:

Employees in part-time[1] employment as a percentage of economically active by industry sector, sex and age
Great Britain, Spring 1979, 1983 and 1987

per cent.

	Men					Women				
Industry sector	*16 to 29*	*30 to 44*	*45 to 59*	*60 plus*	*All ages*	*16 to 29*	*30 to 44*	*45 to 59*	*60 plus*	*All ages*
1979										
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	2·5	[3]	51·4	33·8	[3]	39·4
Production	[3]	[3]	[3]	10·2	1·0	8·6	37·2	31·9	58·1	25·9
Construction	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	0·8	[3]	54·4	40·6	[3]	37·1
Services	2·2	[3]	0·9	21·1	2·8	17·1	54·4	51·9	65·1	42·3
All sectors[2]	1·2	0·3	0·5	15·2	1·8	13·7	48·8	45·6	62·0	36·6
1983										
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	3·0	[3]	38·0	43·0	[3]	36·1
Production	[3]	[3]	[3]	9·0	4·0	6·6	30·1	26·0	50·6	20·8
Construction	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	0·7	[3]	51·8	45·4	[3]	34·6
Services	5·8	0·9	1·7	17·2	3·9	19·3	49·2	49·3	62·1	39·9
All sectors[2]	2·9	0·5	1·0	12·7	2·3	15·2	44·0	43·5	58·8	34·4
1987										
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	3·0	[3]	41·0	28·4	[3]	34·5
Production	1·6	[3]	[3]	9·0	1·3	8·2	28·7	26·3	60·7	20·3
Construction	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]	0·7	[3]	49·8	44·4	[3]	36·9
Services	8·4	1·4	2·3	18·7	5·2	23·7	51·5	51·4	67·0	42·4
All sectors[2]	4·8	0·9	1·4	13·8	3·2	19·6	46·1	45·5	64·5	37·0

[1] The definition of part-time is based on the respondent's own assessment, not on the numbers of hours usually worked.
[2] Includes those who did not state current or previous industry.
[3] Less than 10,000 in cell, percentage based on this estimate not shown.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in the Barnsley, East constituency.

Mr. Lee: The information is in the Library. In November 1988, the latest available date, there were 4,039 unemployed claimants in the Barnsley, East parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under the age of 21 years are currently unemployed in Barnsley, East.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information, which is also in the Library. Unemployment figures are not available for the requested age group. However, in October 1988, the latest available date, the number of unemployed claimants aged under 20 in the Barnsley, East parliamentary constituency was 433.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Clelland To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the budget for training and enterprise councils would come from *(a)* Government funds, *(b)* private sector contributions and *(c)* others.

Mr. Cope: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will receive substantial funding from the Government through the Training Agency. They will also be encouraged to stimulte private sector investment in training and enterprise. It is too early to gauge what proportion of TEC's funding will come from non-Government sources.

Training (Agriculture)

Mr. Ron Davies To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees under YTS and ET are currently in training in agriculture.

Mr. Nicholls: At the end of November 1988 there were 427,900 young people in training on YTS. Of these, 18,600 were training in agriculture and related occupations. Information on the number of ET trainees training in agriculture is not available.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Patchett To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in south Yorkshire are currently on YTS.

Mr. Cope: At 31 December 1988, there were 14,806 young people in training on YTS in south Yorkshire.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Subsidies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much subsidy has been paid to farmers in the Nottingham, North constituency on each of the categories for which subsidy is available for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None. So far as my Department is aware there are no farms in the Nottingham, North constituency.

Salmonella Enteriditis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the extent of salmonella enteritidis infection in the national laying flock.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The reporting of isolations of salmonella in food producing animals is required under the Zoonoses Order 1975. During 1988 there were 20 reports of the isolation of salmonella enteritidis in commercial table egg producing flocks.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the current level of egg consumption; and what was the level of consumption on 1 December 1988.

Mr. Ryder: Based on reports from retailers, egg packers and producers, I estimate that overall demand for eggs fell below normal levels for the time of year by under 10 per cent. in the week ending 3 December, by about 30 per cent in the week ending 10 December and by about 50 per cent. in the week ending 17 December. I estimate that overall demand is now about 10-20 per cent. below normal levels.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number of hens still within the laying cycle that have been culled weekly since 1 December 1988; and what is the total number of hens culled for which compensation has been claimed since the inauguration of the scheme to date.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am aware that producers have been culling hens earlier in the laying cycle, but I have no firm information on the number involved. Culling under the slaughter of hens scheme commenced this week. By Wednesday evening 11 January, 54,000 hens had been slaughtered.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations concerning compensation for laying hens culled before his announcement of the compensation scheme on 19 December.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. Only applications submitted under the scheme, over which proper financial control can be exercised, may be considered for assistance.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inspections were carried out by his officials of *(a)* feed processing plants, *(b)* feed processing plants producing chicken food and *(c)* egg-producing farms in each of the last five years; how many were found to be sub-standard, for each of the last five years; and how many prosecutions there were for each category in each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Details of inspections carried out at processing plants producing animal protein for incorporation into animal feedingstuffs, including for chickens, and the samplings found to be salmonella postive over the last five years are as follows:

	Inspections	*Number of first and subsequent postive samples*
1984	240	80
1985	217	52
1986	122	26
1987	181	26
1988[1]	140	19

[1] Provisional.

If sampling of a plant's production reveals salmonella contamination a notice is served requiring compliance with the bacteriological standard within a time limit. Failure to comply without lawful authority or excuse constitutes an offence. In the cases where resampling still revealed contamination this was not considered to be wilful failure and was therefore not appropriate to bring prosecutions.

Regarding egg producing farms, since there is currently no simple, rapid and sensitive test available for salmonella there is no routine monitoring carried out. However, the recently issued code of practice for commerical layers sets out routine procedures for bacteriological monitoring of birds and hygienic production of eggs.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures are currently being followed to test for salmonella in the egg-laying flock.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since there is currently no simple, rapid and sensitive test available for salmonella there is no routine monitoring of laying flocks carried out by officials.

The recently issued code of practice for commerical laying flocks, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, sets out routine procedures for the bacteriological monitoring of birds and hygienic production of eggs.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is his intention to review the specification for salmonella contamination in eggs and poultry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is no specification for salmonella contamination in eggs and poultry. The reporting of isolations of salmonella in food producing animals is required under the Zoonoses Order 1975.

Marine Fish Farming

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the potential for the expansion of marine fish farming off the coast of England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Ongoing assessments are made of the feasibility of farming species of marine fish and

shellfish in the coastal waters of England and Wales. For the foreseeable future, it is likely that salmon, sea-reared trout and certain shellfish will continue to offer the best prospects for commercial development.

Raspberry Flavouring

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish his Department's definitions of *(a)* raspberry flavour and *(b)* raspberry flavoured.

Mr. Ryder: "Raspberry flavoured" can be used to describe a food only if its flavour comes wholly or mainly from real raspberries. "Raspberry flavour" may be used if the food tastes of raspberries but the flavour does not come mainly from raspberries. The relevant provisions can be found in schedule 7 of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 and are explained in our free booklet "Look at the Label".

Food (Water Content)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish a table showing the maximum permitted levels of water that can be added to *(a)* bread, *(b)* ham, *(c)* poultry, *(d)* bacon and *(e)* pork.

Mr. Ryder: There are no statutory maximum permitted levels of added water for these products. However, the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 require that where added water comprises more than 5 per cent. of the finished product, water shall be declared in its appropriate place in the list of ingredients given on the label. In addition, the Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 require that any added water in cooked cured meat products (ham) and any added water in excess of 10 per cent. in uncooked cured meat products (bacon) shall be declared on the label in close proximity to the name of the food; this declaration is to be given in multiples of 5 per cent. By virtue of European Community legislation, wet-chilled and dry-chilled frozen chickens may absorb up to 7·4 per cent. and 2·9 per cent. added water respectively before any declaration of added water needs to be made.

Food (Children)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to restrict the use of non-nutritive additives in confectionery and other foods intended for young children.

Mr. Ryder: The Food Advisory Committee is in process of sending me further advice on the use of colouring matter in food in the light of public comments on its published report on this matter. I shall be making an announcement of my conclusions on this in due course. The committee is also currently examining the use of additives in food specially prepared for babies and young children and will report to me when that review is concluded.

Pesticides

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of instances of fruit and vegetables polluted by pesticides in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Ryder: As part of the Government's controls on pesticides, samples of a range of foods and agricultural products are monitored for pesticide residues. The results of this monitoring are published periodically in the reports of the working party on pesticide residues. Copies of the reports covering the period 1977 to mid-1985 (food surveillance papers 9 and 16) are available from HMSO. A third report covering the period 1985 to 1988 will be published shortly.

Analytical methods for detecting pesticides are extremely sensitive and small traces can be identified. Such residues as are found in food in the United Kingdom are, in virtually all instances, well below internationally agreed maximum limits, which are themselves designed to incorporate a large margin of safety.

Milk

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the findings of the National Audit Office report on subsidised Common Market milk and milk products; and if he will end the imbalance whereby pupils in independent schools are receiving an average of three times as much subsidised milk as state schools.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Department's accounting officer was examined by the Public Accounts Committee on 7 December 1988 on the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on implementation of the common agricultural policy in Great Britain, and the Ministry now awaits the views of that Committee.

The school milk subsidy scheme makes no distinction between different types of school; it is for each independent school or local education authority to decide whether or not to take advantage of the scheme. Nevertheless, steps have already been taken to identify those local education authority areas where uptake under the scheme is low in order that greater use of the subsidy may be encouraged.

Water

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many occasions since the coming into force of the Water Act 1973, he has issued directions under the provisions of section 5(1) of that Act to water authorities; and for what purpose each such direction was made.

Mr. Ryder: The power has never been used.

TRANSPORT

Gatwick Airport (Night Flying)

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what use has been made of the night-time quota period at Gatwick airport in the summer of the 1988 season, 1 April to 23 October; how many movements were carried out in this period *(a)* under quota and *(b)* by dispensation; and whether he will place on record details of the airlines and aircraft type concerned, and the reason for dispensation in each case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following were the total number of quota movements made by aircraft in each

night noise category at Gatwick during the period 1 April 1988 to 23 October 1988. Movement information broken down by aircraft type is not readily available.

	Aircraft night noise category		
	NN/A (delayed)	*NN/B*	*NN/C*
Quota	60	3,300	1,130
Usage	57	3,300	1,130

The NN/B and NN/C usage figures include 176 movements unavoidably delayed into the night period because of runway resurfacing works.

The quota movements were used by individual airline operators as follows:

Airline	*NN/A (delayed)*	*NN/B*	*NN/C*
Air Europe	1	55	334
Air Malta	—	23	—
Athiaca	—	8	—
American Transair	—	4	—
ATI	—	65	—
Anglo Cargo	—	3	—
Aviogenex	—	3	—
Austrian Airlines	—	7	1
BCal/Cal Air	18	317	7
British Air Ferries	—	86	—
British Island Airways	7	303	99
Britannia	1	369	314
BAL Air	—	8	—
British Airways	—	1,035	18
Cathay Pacific	—	74	—
Continental Airlines	—	4	—
Dan Air	19	633	52
Delta Airlines	—	10	—
Hispania	—	8	—
Inex Adria	—	3	—
JAT	—	3	—
Monarch	—	108	237
Nation Air	—	4	—
North West Airlines	—	2	—
Orion	1	113	65
Philippines	—	4	—
TAP	—	—	1
TWA	—	6	2
Tunis Air	—	29	—
Uganda Airlines	—	2	—
Virgin Atlantic	—	2	—
Ward Air	—	3	—
Yemen Airways	—	2	—
ZAS	—	4	—
Other Airlines (Pool)	10	—	—
Total	57	3,300	1,130

During the course of the last summer season widespread and prolonged air traffic disruption affected operations at the airport. Gatwick Airport Ltd. (GAL) used its powers under the Civil Aviation Act 1982, S78 to disregard 1,581 movements delayed into the night period as a result of this disruption. Dispensations may also be granted for delays to aircraft which are likely to lead to serious congestion at the airport or serious hardship or suffering to passengers or animals. A further 13 dispensations were granted under this category. The numbers of movements disregarded by GAL, grouped by night noise category and airline were as follows:

	Aircraft night noise category			
Airline	*NN/A*	*NN/B*	*NN/C*	*Total*
Air Europe	2	18	314	334
Britannia	0	56	37	93
BIA	30	119	57	206
BA/BCal/Cal Air	0	205	0	205
Monarch	1	5	242	248
Orion	0	61	149	210
Dan Air	104	163	26	293
ATI	0	5	0	5
				1,594

All movement statistics have been supplied by Gatwick Airport Ltd.

British Rail Rolling Stock

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will request the British Railways Board to ensure that the future withdrawal of older but proven passenger coaching stock from service, other than for reasons of safety, will not prejudice the running of timetabled services to maximum passenger capacity.

Mr. Portillo: The Government have set British Rail standards which cover overcrowding. It is for British Rail to decide how best to meet the quality standards most cost effectively.

Company Cars

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he possesses concerning the current or past estimated proportions of car-miles travelled on roads in Greater London whose costs are met by sources other than the taxed income of the drivers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information in this form is not available. Limited data on car journeys for which employer's assistance was given were included in the Greater London travel survey (1981). The Department has recently commissioned research to provide a better understanding of the nature and extent of travel assistance in the London area.

Greater London (Traffic Management)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regular meetings take place and at what intervals, between representatives of his Department and those of all London boroughs concerned with traffic management and the avoidance of congestion; if representatives of the Metropolitan police are present; if agendas, minutes, or reports of any such meetings are sent to any elected persons in Greater London; and if he will place any such documents relating to the year 1988 in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All London borough councils are invited to send an elected member and an official to the annual meeting of the London advisory consultative committee. This meeting provides a forum for all the London local authorities to discuss specific traffic and highway issues of concern to the capital. Representatives of the Metropolitan police are not present at these meetings. An agenda is circulated prior to the meeting and councils are invited to suggest appropriate items for discussion. A note of the meeting is prepared and sent to

the borough representatives. I will arrange for a copy of the note of the meeting held on 2 February to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he possesses concerning the incidence of major traffic congestion in Greater London; what information he receives from the Metropolitan police, London Regional Transport, or other statutory bodies or services; and what is the approximate proportion of major incidents of congestion that have as their principal or contributory cause *(a)* demonstrations, *(b)* official events, *(c)* accidents, *(d)* vehicle breakdowns, *(e)* roadworks, *(f)* illegal parking, *(g)* traffic light failure, and *(h)* shed loads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Records are not maintained of the incidence and causes of individual traffic jams in London. Day-to-day traffic control is a matter for the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information is available to him, hon. Members and the public, respectively, concerning traffic flows, measured in pcus per hour for varied periods in each day along principal vehicular thoroughfares in Greater London; at how many locations measurements of such flows are regularly made; and what public body is currently responsible for such measurements, and for their collation and publication; (2) what sets of figures or maps are available to him which show the maximum design flow in pcu per hour of each of the major traffic thoroughfares in Greater London, as limited by key intersections; and if he will place any such figures or maps in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information on design flow held centrally is incomplete and could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

The Department of Transport conducts a range of traffic surveys to monitor road traffic conditions in London, and undertakes analysis and distribution of results. Estimates of vehicle flow are made for each length of major road between intersections and with other class A or motorway standard roads. There are about 1,600 individual links in all.

Summary information in the form of maps for the Strategic London Road Network of trunk and designated roads is published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1976-1986" and for major roads in the vicinity of the M25 in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1977-1987". Copies are in the Library.

Estimates for individual links are based upon a small sample and therefore subject to appreciable margins of error. A standard one-page report is produced for each link, available on request from the Department of Transport, STC5, room A6.29, Romney house, 43 Marsham street, London. A charge is made to cover handling and computer retrieval costs. Where appropriate the results can be provided on microfiche or other media.

The report gives estimates of annual average flows for weekdays between 7 am and 7 pm, weekdays between 6 am and 10 pm, weekdays for the 24-hour day, and for the full week 24-hour day.

Separate estimates of flow are given for pedal cycles, motor cycles, cars, and taxis, buses and coaches, light goods vehicles, heavy goods vehicles, and all motor vehicles. Heavy goods vehicles are further classified as rigids or articulated and by the numbers of axles.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library any map or diagram in his possession which shows the current approximate flows in persons per hour, at the peak evening or morning hour, of all passenger-carrying railways in Greater London, or wider area.

Mr. Portillo: Information of the kind requested will be included in the report of the central London rail study, which is to be published shortly. I will then send the hon. Member a copy.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show the estimated or actual level of passenger traffic within the Greater London area for each year from 1983 to 1988 which shall include for each year *(a)* passenger journeys by bus services operated under the auspices of London Regional Transport, *(b)* passengers carried and passenger miles, respectively, travelled on railways currently operated by London Underground Limited, and *(c)* the number of passengers arriving and departing at (i) central London stations of the British Railways Board and (ii) through other stations within the Greater London, or similar area.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates are as follows:

Passenger Traffic in Greater London (millions)

	LRT Bus Passenger Journeys[1]	*LRT Underground*		*BR Central Stations*[2]	
		Passenger Journeys	*Passenger Miles*	*Passengers Arriving*	*Passengers Departing*
1983	1,090	563	2,700	162	157
1984	—	—	—	165	159
1984-85	1,160	672	3,340	—	—
1985	—	—	—	169	166
1985-86	1,153	732	3,710	—	—
1986	—	—	—	180	177
1986-87	1,165	769	3,862	—	—
1987	—	—	—	194	188
1987-88	1,286	798	3,888	—	—

[1] Includes some journeys outside the Greater London area.
[2] Includes some Inter-City passengers.

Further information on passenger traffic in London is given in "Transport Statistics for London" published yesterday. A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Spearing: To ask th Secretary of State for Transport what information he possesses concerning the current number of *(a)* work and *(b)* non-work journeys

made on a normal weekday within the Greater London area and the approximate proportion of each made principally by (i) car, (ii) bus or coach and (iii) rail.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates from the 1985-86 national travel survey are as follows:

Average number of journeys made in London on a weekday

	Work Journeys		Non-work Journeys[1]	
	Number (millions)	per. cent.	Number (millions)	per. cent.
Car	3·0	42	5·3	35
Bus/Coach	0·7	10	1·6	11
Rail	1·5	22	0·6	4
Walk[2]	1·2	17	7·1	47
Other	0·6	9	0·5	3
Total	7·0	100	15·1	100

[1] Non-work journeys by London residents only.
[2] Excluding walk journeys of less than 50 yards.

Classification Societies

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any further moves are anticipated to increase the role of classification societies in inspectorate work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The survey and certification of submersible craft and their associated handling systems, and the approval of the intact stability on mobile offshore drilling units, are shortly to be delegated to the classification societies. There are no present plans to increase the role of the classification societies in other statutory surveys, but a review of the working relationship between the Department and the classification societies is being undertaken and when this is completed the possibility of further delegation will be considered. In addition my Department is planning a pilot study to test the possibility of transferring to other organisations some of the work connected with the re-survey of small passenger ships carrying no more than 50 passengers.

Mhari (Sinking)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the sinking of the Mhari following the publication of his inspector's report in December 1985; and whether he will now consider the possibility of raising the wreck for further examination.

Mr. Portillo: Representations have been received from relatives of those lost with this vessel, from hon. Members and from members of the public.

The Department has no responsibility for the removal of wrecks and does not plan to raise that of the Mhari for examination.

UK-Singapore Air Route

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has discussed with British Airways the question of increased capacity on the United Kingdom-Singapore route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Discussions were held in London this week between United Kingdom and Singapore civil aviation officials on arrangements for the provision of air services between the United Kingdom and Singapore. The discussions made useful progress and they are expected to continue in Singapore within the next two months.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what capital expenditure he expects to be necessary to modify the railway route south of King's Cross, currently used by the Thameslink services, to enable it to carry rolling stock of standard loading gauge to and from the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: Such a proposal would need to be costed by the British Railways Board.

British Rail Engineering Limited

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions have been reached about the sale of British Rail Engineering Limited.

Mr. Portillo: The Railways Board has decided to select a consortium of the management and employees of British Rail Engineering Limited. Trafalgar House plc and Asea Brown Boveri Ltd. as preferred bidder for the purchase of its engineering subsidiary BREL (1988) Ltd. Government consent to the sale will ultimately be required and the British Rail chairman has asked for our agreement in principle to the board's decision. My right hon. Friend is considering this and a statement will be made as soon as possible.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

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Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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